

DOCTORAL THESIS

Embodiment, Appreciation and Dance

Issues in relation to an exploration of the experiences of London based, 'non-aligned' artists

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Embodiment, Appreciation and Dance:

**Issues in relation to an exploration of the experiences of
London based, 'non-aligned' artists.**

By

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Abstract

This thesis offers an interdisciplinary exploration of 'embodiment' in relation to the appreciation of dance as a performing art practised in contemporary London at the beginning of the twenty first century.

Consideration of different uses of the term 'embodiment' suggests that while artists may approach the embodiment of their dance with a sense of personal intention, their dancing may also be understood to embody 'ways of being' that, enmeshed within a wider culture, raise questions as to the relationship between individual agency and the discursive practices within which dance is understood. Such conceptual reflections establish a theoretical context from which to investigate the viewpoints of dance artists themselves.

Fieldwork amongst dance artists thus contributed to the research. Working in London but coming from a range of dance traditions and making work outside the 'mainstream' dance companies, their input provides valuable insights into what, at present, may be important aspects of culture that influence what is perceived as embodied in dance. In addition, their experiences of making and performing dance inform investigation of the relationship between phenomenological and semiotic approaches to dance.

In this context consideration of what is embodied in dance is found to be important to reflection on its appreciation. Further, the appreciation of dance performance is considered as an embodied act, important to which is the phenomenological experience of dance as communicative. Such experience is suggested to be dependent on, but not completely bound by semiotic

systems thus allowing for the personal agency of both performer and audience.

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Introduction

0.0 Background to the Research

What is happening between performer and audience when a performance 'works'? This question, almost an afterthought in my planned discussions with dance artists as part of this research, seemed to get to the heart of what they most valued in their chosen art form: a sense of 'exchange', an insight into another person, a 'shared journey', 'shared experience' and the importance of emotional 'truth' featured as important to their experiences of dance. I was reminded in their replies not only of my own experiences as both performer and audience, but also of how in my more academic studies of dance, I had tended to side step such issues since they are difficult to account for without seeming theoretically naïve.

What follows is an account of my interrogation of some aspects of how dance is experienced in performance. Focussing on dance created for presentation in London's theatres and dance spaces, I was concerned with exploring approaches to how it is appreciated and understood to be significant.

Considering this from a range of perspectives, including that of artists themselves, and motivated by personal experience, in the research process the subjective became diffused into the intersubjective: my reflections were brought into play with those of others, not only on the topic of dance as art within western culture but also on human embodiment and the conceptual frameworks within which the relationships between self and world are understood.

Prior to accounting for this process, lingering a little in the realms of the personal provides an opportunity to offer insights into what shaped my perspective: first, as a young ballet dancer, I was disorientated by the differences in responses to my performances; I was convinced that for my part, in most aspects the performances had been the same, although I distinctly thought that the audiences had 'felt' different; a few years later as a student of contemporary dance I could not help noticing that my fellow students would insist on talking about expressing themselves in their dancing however much the theory they studied posited the significance of the features of a dance rather than the feeling of the dancer; then at the end of this period of training, an intense feverish dream brought to my attention that I could never cut off a constant sense of watching myself. At this point I had no knowledge of such concepts as 'the male gaze' or 'panopticism' that might have provided a means to interpret this sense of an internal eye, but believed I had recognised the impact of dance training on my consciousness.

Later again, organising community dance events in South East London, I experienced the intensity of each participant's viewpoint as to what dance was more or less worthy of their interest and became increasingly aware of the close relationship between people's cultural perspectives and their dance values. I began to question some of the assumptions about dance that I had previously taken for granted by considering the influence of my experiences as a white, middle class female exponent of ballet and the 'contemporary' dance that draws on North American and European innovations. Yet, while becoming more sensitive to what might be thought of as the underlying cultural significance of both posture and action, I was also curious about those instances that seemed to counteract the limitations on dance as only being understood within cultural conventions. For example, at a South

London community dance event (Morley College, July 1996), a performance of Ethiopian dance by Yagersaw Yaheyered, was appreciated as exceptional by an audience none of whom had ever previously seen this dance. In its complex shoulder actions and lack of pelvic movement, its technique is distinct from many African dance techniques that are recognised and have influenced dance in the west. Presumably, since the dancer had performed for a major dance company in Ethiopia he was, by Ethiopian dance standards, good. Was it just coincidence that the audience, who were not aware of this background, could recognise his abilities? Was his performance simply valued for its difference? Was it valued as 'art'? Perhaps the precision and dynamic complexity of his movements could be valued by an audience with some experience of watching a range of different dance. Yet in addition to his remarkable and different physical skills, what I remember most strongly is the sense of the enjoyment of a connection between dancer and audience which I associated with other moments when I have most enjoyed watching dances and dancing. However, what I had learned about how to appreciate dance, for the most part, had tended to steer clear of accounting for that sense of connection. The dance theory I had studied in the 1980s emphasised the analysis of constituent features and their structural relations to support the interpretation and evaluation of dance. It was left to the field of anthropology to question the Performer-Audience Connection (Hanna, 1983).

Bemused by my experiences, it took some time to clarify that what I was interested in pursuing was how consideration of what might be perceived as embodied in dance could contribute to its understanding and appreciation. This entailed developing a research method that allowed for reflection on the experience of dance (my own and that of more experienced dance artists) alongside theoretical perspectives developed from a range of academic

disciplines. These interdisciplinary perspectives were particularly important in working to clarify some of the different uses of 'embodiment' and 'appreciation' that was an important element of the research.

0.1 Research Parameters and Some Issues of Terminology

A full account of the research process is outlined in chapter one, in which the choice of research methodologies and the defining of the parameters for the research are discussed. The latter was problematic in that my interests ranged over a number of areas concerned with what might be considered as 'embodiment' and its relationship to the understanding, interpretation and appreciation of performance. Narrowing the focus to consider the topic in relation to dance in contemporary London helped define limits to the research. The six London based artists who contributed to this study, and my rationale for choosing them are also discussed in this chapter. The artists are defined as 'non aligned' to indicate that they are not making work for large, regularly funded companies and may be thought to strive, to some extent, to maintain their own artistic priorities rather than being caught up in the dictates of 'major 'players on the dance scene. Those whose works mainly draw on 'contemporary'ⁱ dance traditions would be termed 'Independent Artists' within the dance community in Britain. However, because this term is at present associated with particular forms of dance developing out innovations in North America and Europe it seemed important to find a different term that would include a larger range of dance forms, including those emanating from 'non western' traditions. This was particularly important as while half of the participants draw on predominantly 'contemporary' dance traditions in their work, of the others one is based in the traditions of Egyptian dance, another kathak, and a third in a 'fusion' that owes much to the 'freestyle' jazz that developed in clubs as opposed to the theatre.

This raised another issue of terminology. What has been termed 'western theatre dance' is usually thought of as being based on traditions originating in Europe and North America (ballet, American modern dance, European modern dance and so on). However, in a postmodern, global society, defining dance in relation to origins is problematic. Apart from the sense of linear development out of kilter with a postmodern focus on discontinuities, the dance presented in London's theatres and dance spaces may quite regularly draw on dance forms whose traditions are thought of as being centred in the continents of Africa, Asia or South America. When a South Asian dance company visits London it makes sense to suggest South Asian dance presented in a western theatre is still South Asian dance (albeit in some way changed by being presented out of context). Yet if a British resident creates a dance for performance within a London dance space drawing on, say, a kathak dance heritage, it seems odd to suggest it is out of context within western theatre. However, to label it as western theatre dance would seem to discount the importance of the cultural traditions of kathak, while simply to label it 'theatre dance' might suggest that all theatre dance globally is the same or, that all theatre dance is now subsumed under a concept determined by practices in the west.

In each case a description of the precise dance traditions and the intended performance context of a dance performance would mitigate such problems. However, apart from being unwieldy, this might then suggest a complete disintegration of a localized theatrical dance culture which, while fractured by difference, might still be thought of as a 'family' of dance performance practices understood through the rhizomatous structure of their interconnections. I thus decided on the descriptor (western) theatre dance to

indicate dance made within western culture, for presentation to western orientated theatre audiences (wherever they may be based geographically) but potentially drawing on dance traditions from anywhere in the world. Under the umbrella of (western) theatre dance might come artists whose work draws on one or more dance forms from ballet and 'contemporary' to butoh, Egyptian dance, flamenco, Ghanaian dance, Hip Hop, kathak, jazz, street dance, tap and so on, each with its unique heritage but all being presented within a similar performance context. Thus while the kathak based work suggested above might come under this category, a traditional kathak dance presented as a part of a specific cultural event not publicised to an audience would not, whether it were taking place in Southall or Mumbai.

As can be seen from this discussion of terms, in postmodernity boundaries are often challenged, even dissolved on occasion; yet while recognising that the distinction between the west and its 'other' is problematic, in the contexts of globalisation and postmodernity such conceptual understandings may be viewed as shifting but yet to be obliterated. Similarly the present vogue for site specific work that has taken dance into all sorts of unusual spaces adds a further layer of complication because it plays with assumptions about the performance location. At present while new and experimental work raises all sorts of questions about what is understood by 'theatre', a distinction can still be made between a performance that goes into unusual places and those that unquestionably belong (street carnival for instance) in a different milieu to the conventional theatre. For the purposes of this research, my aim is simply that the term (western) theatre dance describes the situation that exists at present with all the inherent contradictions encompassed by postmodern performances.

0.2 Concepts of 'Embodiment' and 'Appreciation'

Having determined on the parameters and initial research methods, it was necessary to explore 'embodiment' and 'appreciation' and the relationship between them. The initial theoretical reflections into these terms provided the basis for the first series of discussions with artists, suggesting 'foreshadowed' problems that could be explored in relation to their experiences. These underpinning considerations are thus presented prior to a focus on the artists' perspectives: an investigation, placed within the context of western philosophical aesthetics, forms the basis of chapter two while the focus of chapter three is on anthropological and sociological perspectives.

Approaches to appreciating (western) theatre dance as art have roots in a long tradition of western philosophical aesthetics. An exploration of those that seem to influence how dance is currently appreciated informs a discussion of the implications for what might be understood by 'embodiment' in this context. One issue that arises is a distinction between understanding and interpreting a dance: whereas the latter may emphasise an act of translating meaning (or meanings) usually into words, 'understanding' may suggest a way of perceiving the work to make sense of it for itself. While this is considered to rely on active perception, in itself an interpretative act, a distinction is made that allows for aspects of a work which cannot always easily be explained in words to be viewed as significant. Moreover, appreciating a dance is suggested to be dependent on experiencing a way of understanding it for oneself rather than comprehending another person's reasons for their interpretation; thus while interpreting aspects of a dance may inform appreciation, to interpret a dance is not the same as appreciating it. A focus on interpretation is viewed as a problem of those semiotic approaches which, by focussing on the dance as 'text', may marginalise those bodily

significances that are difficult to discuss. This however is not intended to give the impression that such bodily significances are not publicly available, hidden in the unfathomable depths of the psyche or in some mystic realm. It does however emphasise that communication about them is not always easy.

In contrast to a long tradition in the appreciation of art, academic interest in 'embodiment' is comparatively recent. However, currently within the dance community the term has become very popular, although the theoretical perspectives that underpin its use may not always be clear. This latter point took some teasing out since the term is used in a range of approaches to dance. In general use the term 'embodiment' is perhaps shifting away from the more generalised sense, still found in many dictionaries, of giving (bodily) form to an idea. What is emerging is a new specific concern with the bodily aspects of subjectivity. For instance in the field of cognitive science, 'the basic notion of embodiment is broadly understood as the unique way an organism's sensorimotor capacities enable it to successfully interact with its environmental niche' (Cowart, 2006). While perhaps in the field of dance science the term might be used in this manner, there are subtle differences in how it might be used in other areas of dance such as in a practical class, in discussion of aesthetic considerations, in semiotic approaches to dance and in considering dance from a sociological or anthropological perspective. For example, indicative of many approaches to embodiment in dance practice is that of the dance educators and writers Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Anna Sanchez-Colberg who, influenced by the phenomenological approaches to dance of Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (1979) and Sondra Horton-Fraleigh (1987), emphasise the lived experience of the individual act of embodiment:

Embodiment of movement involves the whole person, a person conscious of being a living body, living that experience, giving intention to the movement material. It involves perceiving oneself in the space and hearing one's sound, with kinaesthetic awareness of creating and controlling movement.

Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2002, 7

The importance of the concept of 'embodiment' to attempts to account for the totality of the whole person in dance became a key issue that emerged during the research, particularly with regard to counteracting what are often regarded as dualist attitudes to the body as 'instrument'.

Whereas Preston-Dunlop's choreological approach (1998) to dance offers a view of embodiment primarily from the phenomenological perspective of the dance artist, in philosophical aesthetics the focus is more generally placed on how significance might be viewed as embodied in the artwork. While interest in embodiment may be thought of as developing out of phenomenology, and particularly the work of the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962 [1945], 1972 [1961]), within philosophical aesthetics in Britain the term seems to have come into more general use in the 1960s with philosophers such as Louis Arnaud Reid using it to describe how content and form are indivisible in a finished work of art (Reid, 1969 and 1979 [1961]). That is, what is embodied was found to be discovered *in* the artwork rather than existing prior to its fruition. The American philosophical aesthetician, Monroe Beardsley (1975 [1966], 336), made use of the term in a similar manner but also related it retrospectively to the Romantic period in his translation of the early nineteenth century writing of August Wilhelm Schlegel who, according to Beardsley, stated:

Romantic poetry embodies a striving for the infinite, stems from Christianity, and is marked by inner division of spirit, a sense of gap between actual and ideal, hence an unsatisfied longing.

Schlegel in Beardsley, 1975 [1966], 245

The significance of this 'striving' and 'inner division' in the Romantic tradition raises issues about responses to the Christian and rationalist legacies that are explored, in relation to ballet, in chapter six. In terms of the concept of 'embodiment', there being no nineteenth century source for Beardsley's translation, it may be that this use of 'embodiment' reflects his understanding from the perspective of the mid twentieth century.

More recently, the philosophical aesthetician Paul Crowther has drawn on the existential phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty within an approach to aesthetics that also draws on Kant, Heidegger and Hegel to develop an ecological theory of art in which aesthetic ideas may be understood to be embodied in the 'sensuous manifold' that is the work of art. In terms of dance, as Bonnie Rowell (2003) has pointed out, it is intentional human beings, dancers, who perform the dance in which ideas are embodied. For the purposes of this research the complexity of the interplay between dancer and choreographer is set aside, the focus being on considering artists who perform in their own work.

In addition to (or rather intermeshed with) aesthetic ideas that may be considered to be embodied in dance, is what may be termed a broader cultural embodiment. In the appreciation of dance it may be useful to consider how culture may be embodied through all the physical habits particular to members of a cultural group. It can be argued that this aspect

has long been of interest to dance critics: writers from the past, while working within a discourse separated from that of contemporary cultural theory, may be felt to offer rich insights into current discussions with regard to the broader cultural significance embodied in the minutiae of movement in performance. For instance the, Romantic poet and dance critic, Théophile Gautier, in his oft cited distinction between the dancers Fanny Elssler and Marie Taglioni, situates their differences within two contrasting, but equally significant influences on the development of western culture, classical civilisation and Christianity:

Mlle. Taglioni is a Christian dancer if one may make use of such an expression in regard to an art proscribed by the Catholic faith: she flies like a spirit in the midst of the transparent clouds of white muslin ... she resembles a happy angel who scarcely bends the petals of celestial flowers with the tips of her pink toes. Fanny is a quite pagan dancer; she reminds one of the muse Terpsichore, tambourine in hand, her tunic exposing her thigh...when she bends freely from her hips, throwing back her swooning voluptuous arms, we seem to see one of those beautiful figures from Herculaneum or Pompeii...

Gautier, 1986 [1837], 15 -16

Gautier situates his responses to dance by emphasising the ballerinas as sources of poetic imagery within western traditions of iconography. Over a hundred years later, the American poet and critic, Edwin Denby, managed to convey the relationship between dance style and culture, this time not by referring to differences between individual dancers but to the dynamic qualities of different balletic styles. Commenting on the differences between the emerging American ballet and the European he stated:

The American dancers had neither an instinct for imaginative characterisation through liberties of rhythm and accent in classical variations, nor an ensemble instinct for the kind of rhythmic liberty the Ballet Russe had used for a sweeping collective climax.....

The American steadiness and exactitude of rhythm, its reticence of phrasing, have not the same but a different clarity of sweep. They do not underline the pathos of a scene by taking sides, but its tragedy by not taking any.

Denby, 1968 [1947], 400

In the context of the concerns of the time, his description may be interpreted as an allusion to both America's steady march on the path of modernity and the Nation's relation to the rest of the world, manifested in an isolationist foreign policy only being dropped quite late into the Second World War.

While not all dance critics have had the same poetic grasp of language, others have also found ways to hint at some kind of relationship between culture and dance style. For instance, there is a rather withering account of the post hey-day Royal Ballet in New York by the American critic Arlene Croce in which she noted: 'The dullness of the Royal Ballet in its off seasons is a patronizing dullness only British dancers can inflict' (Croce, 1978 [1969], 379). Croce was too wily to be found in need of a proof for relating perceived inadequacies in the dancing to what are (at least from an American standpoint) flaws in the British way of life and added that she did not think 'there's any connection'. However she then proceeded to provide her American readers with an insight into the very hierarchic casting system of the Royal Ballet and the rather old fashioned, slightly patronising attitude of the British dance establishment to their American hosts. In this manner her readers were led to draw their own conclusions about any relationship to the

'stuffy' dancers she described as too often locked into rather two dimensional stage personae.

While in dance criticism there has been something of a tradition of implicit recognition of the relationship between dance and the wider culture, it is only in comparatively recent academic studies of dance, including discussions of criticism (Banes, 1994, Jowitt, 1995), that this relationship has been made explicit. It was, however, the subject of earlier works on dance written from an anthropological perspective. For instance, Gertrude Kurath posited the relationship of American modern dance to American culture in 1965 (Kurath, 1986 [1965] 366-383). Something of the reticence of part of the wider dance community to accept the relationship of theatrical dance to a wider culture permeates a 1970s account of ballet by Kurath's fellow ethnologist Joann Kealiinohomoku:

The question is not that ballet reflects its own heritage.
The question is why we seem to need to believe that
ballet has somehow become acultural. Why are we
afraid to call it an ethnic form?

The answer is I believe that Western dance scholars
have not used the word ethnic in its objective sense;
they have used it as a euphemism for such old
fashioned terms as "heathen," "pagan," "savage," or
the more recent term "exotic."

Kealiinohomoku, 1983 [1970], 546

However by the 1980s the relationship of dance to the wider culture found its way into books intended to support the more general academic study of dance. So that dance scholar Pauline Hodgins in a book on dance analysis stated:

Dances are social and cultural products which embody, and are created and received in relation to, the conventions and traditions of a particular time and place.

Hodgens, 1988, 65

Similarly reaching the pages of a 'dance reader' was the view of anthropologist and pop culturalist Ted Polhemus that:

While physical culture may be viewed as crystallization - an embodiment - of the most deeply rooted and fundamental level of what it means to be a member of a particular society, dance might be seen as a second stage of this process.

Polhemus, 1998 [1993], 174

Within the related field of sociological investigation of dance, Helen Thomas used Graham's Appalachian Spring (1944) to exemplify her view that:

Dance is simultaneously a feature of the socio-cultural context of its emergence, creation and performance and a reflexive practice realised through the medium of the body...

Thomas, 1995, 1

And Valerie Preston-Dunlop, writing with more poetic intent and influenced by phenomenological accounts of dance suggested how political attitudes may be given form:

Plotful and plotless dances
may reveal social values -
an appreciation of the ensemble not the étoile,
a reverence for the mundane not the sophisticated,
a detestation of elitism or racial intolerance,
of sexist behaviour, of homophobia.
They are given form in the dance
through choices made,
in casting, in movement material, in group forms.

Preston-Dunlop, 1998, 15

Preston-Dunlop proposed that artists exert agency in making creative choices that reveal values that challenge what, in some parts of the 'dance world', may have been previously accepted norms. More recently Gay Morris has drawn on the theories of the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu to contemplate the underlying significance of the body that may also have political implications:

In terms of dance, this view of bodily practice offers the possibility of dance ordering thoughts and feelings not just through choreography but in the basic techniques and comportment that present the body to the world in a particular way.

Morris, 2001, 57

Albeit couched in different terms and drawing from different theoretical approaches, which are explored further in chapters two and three, there seems to be a general consensus that dance in some way embodies wider social significance than may be immediately apparent. It is, however, sometimes difficult to establish this except by reference to actions that are easily interpreted in relation to codes that are already well understood within a stated context; these can then provide 'proven' examples. Such 'evidence' may refer to accepted conventions of everyday non-verbal behaviour, or the established significance of actions within a dance tradition or as defined by the choreographer. Hence although Morris (2001) suggests the significance of 'basic techniques and comportment' in her discussion of how consideration of the concept of 'habitus' may illuminate understanding of Martha Graham's Night Journey (1947), she tends to focus on the significance of 'conventionalised movement and gesture' or the more 'denotative' movements by referring to easily understood, almost mimetic actions, such

as Jocasta's rocking her son/husband Oedipus in her arms (Morris, 2001, 72). Morris is aware of how 'struggles within the dance field', between the values of early Modern dance and ballet, are embodied (Morris, 2001, 61) and relates these to Graham's personal struggles as a woman in dance. However, in the discussion of gender issues, the analysis of how the movement might be understood to explore male:female power relationships is perhaps limited to those that refer to readily identifiable codes. Thus reference is made to such easily defined features as the use of different stage areas, roles in partnering, even size of steps. Yet the underlying tensions in Graham's dance could be read as revealing the pressures on women in a modern, but patriarchal, society to meet up to ideals of behaviour in terms of class and gender that conflict with the desire for a freer expression of their sexuality and individual agency.

Within academic discourse how a particular play on dynamic tensions in the spine might carry connotations (in the above example for instance of the underlying conflict in the social position of women in the 1940s) is open to debate. Such subtleties of movement provide less solid ground for discussion than examples that rely on interpretations that draw on well established codes such as who is placed downstage. Yet it may be that differences in postural organisation that Bourdieu calls the 'bodily hexis' can be very significant in what is understood in a dance work. Pierre Bourdieu's (1979) description of the 'habitus' that Morris draws upon suggests how bodily ways of being are an important part of the 'feel for the game' necessary to fit in with a particular cultural group. From the point of view of understanding dance, what is problematic is that the underlying rules of the 'game' may not always be made explicit.

0.3 Interdisciplinary Perspectives

One further outcome of consideration of the habitus is the potential for a particular understanding of aesthetic experience to be considered as part of that 'feel for the game' of a specific cultural group. Following the consideration, in chapter three, of the sociologist Norbert Elias' discussion of distancing in the civilising process and Bourdieu's demonstration of the relationship between taste and class, it is possible to see the notion of the aesthetic attitude as proposed by Bullough (1977) [1912] and Stollnitz (1960), together with the sensitivity to discern particular aesthetic features, as to be part of the habitus of a group that is recognisably western orientated and elite. Thus viewing aesthetic experience as an indicator of artistic value becomes problematic unless it is accepted that the tastes of a particular group should be prioritised. While this is an unattractive proposition, attempts to shift the focus away from aesthetics have not necessarily resulted in satisfactory resolutions to the problem. Institutional definitions of art (Dickie, 1974) may allow for a broader range of tastes but may lead to a focus on the extrinsic concerns that shape dance and arts institutions. While a tendency to account for the appreciation of dance works in relation to their semiotic significance raises once more the problem of interpretation. On the terms of (inter)textual analysis, different readings of a dance may become reduced to choices between discourses and as such, as is explored in relation to George Balanchine's The Four Temperaments (1946), are often too easily politicised in terms that fail to account fully for the experience of the dance. Crowther's (1993) ecological definition of art is again referred to, in this third chapter, in relation to his argument against reducing questions of aesthetic value to those of the status and preferences of different groups. Instead, as he proposes, emphasis is placed on the need for more debate, incorporating a multiplicity of viewpoints, to consider the basis of aesthetic judgements.

In tandem with allowing for the communication of diverse aesthetic perspectives, the potential for the interrelationship between phenomenology and semiotics is revisited in chapter three. Following Thomas Csordas' (1994) discussion of the relationships between perceived dualities, it is suggested that the interplay of phenomenological and semiotic approaches to dance might allow for a fuller reflection on what is understood. Further, in the moment of watching dance the imagination may have a role to play in facilitating understanding of dance that draws on ways of being that are not part of the spectator's own cultural experience?

0.4 Artists' Perspectives

While the ethnographic element of this interdisciplinary research is limited, it was important to me, as a previous practitioner, to bring artists' perspectives into consideration alongside those of dance theorists, sociologists, anthropologists and philosophical aestheticians. The play between semiotics and phenomenology is thus interrogated further in chapter four, not so much in relation to academic texts but rather in consideration of what some dance artists themselves have to say about their experiences of performing their own work in the current dance ecology. Such a limited and qualitative study could hardly be presented as 'proof', but it is interesting that each artist can be viewed as having developed strategies for bringing their (phenomenological) experience of dance into play with their understanding of dance as 'read' (as in semiotics). However, the methods by which this is achieved are found to be varied.

Similarly in this fourth chapter, the different means by which dancers seem to develop a sense of their self as seen by others are discussed. In this context

the current turn away from the use of mirror in some dance practices is linked to interest in bodily sensitivity and the notion of the 'lived body' that draws on phenomenological approaches to dance. Referring to the work of sociologist Charles Varela (1997), these concepts are viewed as reflecting a desire to counteract the experience of 'disembodiment' that emerges from what is experienced as body:mind dualism pursued to an extreme. A related theme, addressed in this chapter, considers concerns of the artists with a sense of communication in performance. It is suggested that while this may be common to much dance practice, it is perhaps particularly prized in a society in which moments of social interaction may often be limited or fraught. This sense of communication in the moment is then linked to the current popularity of improvisation in performance.

Within the context of dance performance, the dancers' comments in relation to norms of physical appearance and action are also discussed. That the artists, while sharing the experience of living and working in London, differed in terms of dance background, ethnicity and gender was important to the development of the research as it facilitated the recognition of some 'taken for granted' attitudes that might be perceived as embodied in their work. In addition, it allowed for consideration of those aspects of current social experience that may be of particular significance to a range of artists. These issues raise the question of individual agency in relation to the extent artists feel they can vary from, or even be seen to challenge perceived norms. In this context that some artists preferred to remain anonymous is interesting. While some artists had no hesitation about their name being revealed, others were more concerned. This latter group's reasons for their decision remained private and may have been simply due to the fact that they were aware our discussions had ranged over quite personal experiences

and feeling and, just in case they had missed any possible allusion to thisⁱⁱ in the editing process, decided it was prudent to be anonymous. However it is also possible that they were concerned in terms of their ‘non aligned status’ that they retained control over suggestions of any challenge to accepted norms. In one case an artist who had seemed quite unconcerned about their name being published changed their mind when I suggested they check with the person responsible for marketing and applying for funding for their work.

These initial discussions with artists informed further reflection and research (that included further discussions with three of the artists) that is accounted for in chapters five, six and seven. The topics aired will not surprise anyone involved with dance or even wider cultural issues: chapter five focuses on issues of cultural diversity and ethnicity, chapter six on those of gender and sexuality, and chapter seven, in considering style and skill in the context of postmodernity, further raises issues about difference, including in ability. However, through these chapters is interwoven a development of the previous discussions. In particular, consideration of the importance of the phenomenological experience of dance as communicative is developed alongside scrutiny of what may be perceived to be embodied in dance. This emphasises how current interests in ‘embodiment’ may be felt to reveal a retreat from mind:body dualism and a search for new ways of conceptualising the relationships of mind:body, self:other.

Finally, from consideration of the artists’ discussions of their experiences of presenting dance as art in London, the issues raised are drawn upon to suggest some common aesthetic values that seem to be important to those artists participating in the research. It is argued that these values may be perceived to be embodied in their work and, as such, contribute to what may

be appreciated in their dances. This leads to the suggestion that in viewing dance performance within the context of (western) theatre as a communicative phenomenon it can be enriching not only to engage with dance as an aesthetic phenomenon but to do so recognising that aesthetic appreciation may be viewed as an embodied act enmeshed within culture.

Note to Introduction

ⁱ Since what may be termed contemporary dance is also a disputed term (Grau, 1998) 'contemporary' dance is here understood as that presented as such in London (i.e. dance that prioritises approaches that draw on choreographic traditions developed within American and European modern and postmodern dance).

ⁱⁱ I attempted not to include personal reminiscences/remarks that I felt the artists might regret being publicised, anonymous or not, but such discussions do colour my interpretation of other comments.

1

Approaching the Subject

1.0 Introduction

This research developed out of my interest in the relationship between previous experience and the appreciation of dance performances. Initially this was stimulated by my involvement in the field of dance, and in particular by experiences working on the fringes of the dance community. These led to my becoming aware that what I had accepted as established norms in both ballet and 'contemporary' dance might strike people external to these fields as problematic. At the same time, I became increasingly conscious of marked differences in people's responses to different forms of dance: these might be manifested in contrasting audience responses, in disagreement about the significance of aspects of a particular dance or conflicting opinions as to whether certain dance works should be considered as art. Such differences raised questions with regard to the relationship between wider cultural experience and the appreciation of dance. However, my experience of dance being enjoyed across cultural boundaries suggested that this relationship is not one of a straightforward correlation and, further, that understanding of the complexities of this relationship might be developed by exploration of how the significance of dance can be understood as embodied. I was interested in how audiences understand the significance of a dance work and the value judgements they make about it. What a dance is understood to embody may have an impact on both of these (not unrelated) aspects of appreciation.

As I pursued my topic it became evident that while in the dance sector embodiment was a popular topic, there were variations in the theoretical

context in which the term was used. Just what is meant by the terms 'embodiment' and 'appreciation' thus warranted conceptual clarification as part of the research. It was important to me to consider the conceptual issues that arose, not only in relation the theoretical context or even to my own experiences of dance, but by drawing also on the reflections of dance artists themselves.

1.1 Focus of the Research

The focus of this study is the relationship between what may be understood as embodied and the appreciation of (western) theatre dance. Contemplating 'embodiment' in relation to (western) theatre dance, a cultural activity that people do within the context of 'the arts', suggested an interdisciplinary approach to the research: discussion of 'embodiment' entailed drawing on sociological and anthropological perspectives, exploration of different ways of conceptualising mind:body in philosophy, and, in relation to the appreciation of dance, consideration of philosophical aesthetics and developments in the field of dance analysis. Further, due to my own experience of how dance theory can become disengaged from practice, and the suspicious attitude to 'theory' of many dance artists, I was anxious to ground my reflections by reference to accounts of those involved in making and performing dance. It therefore was important to incorporate information arising from elements of ethnographic research. While it may seem unusual in an account of appreciation to consider the artists' experience, it will be seen that this is important in an approach that will explore the relationship between performer and audience as central to understanding dance as a communicative act in which what is understood as embodied can be an important element.

Recognising that the chosen research topic would inevitably lead to quite complex issues in consideration of embodiment and appreciation, it seemed prudent to restrict the dance focus of the research. This could have been achieved by focussing on one dance form or genreⁱ. However, given that the breakdown between the boundaries of genre has become a feature of much current dance practice, I decided to situate this exploration in relation to dance as a performing art taking place within a specific geographical context. Since what I had already found to be problematic were issues raised by dance within a culturally diverse society, I chose to focus on an area which demonstrated a rich variety of dance and a culturally diverse population. London at the turn of the millennium certainly fulfilled these criteria; moreover, having created work myself within this milieu and having worked within community dance in South East London, I recognised I would be able to draw on these experiences as ‘insider’ to gain access to artists which would facilitate the ethnographic aspect of the research.

This choice did lead to some difficulties in deciding on the conceptual parameters of this interdisciplinary study. For instance, in terms of an exploration of the social context in which current dance practices are situated, to ignore issues of cultural diversity would be absurd given the extent concerns linked to these issues (immigration, racism and security for instance) regularly feature in the popular media. The interplay between people from different cultural backgrounds has been an important element of my experience in London and it seemed appropriate to frame the research so as to highlight some of the facets of cultural diversity. Yet to consider all the theoretical perspectives on London’s diverse population, especially in the light of events that occurred after I chose my topicⁱⁱ, would make the study unwieldy or disproportionately concerned with one issue. Similarly, while I

situated my understanding of dance appreciation within the traditions of (western) theatre dance, I was aware of a number of artists who drew on 'non western' traditions but presented them within the context of western theatre. It seemed important not to discount such artists, but to research all the different dance traditions thoroughly in relation to different cultural traditions in the arts would have been impossible in the time allocated. So I restricted my focus to considering the range of dance presented for performance in London on the basis of what emerged from discussions with artists. This was then reflected upon in relation to a framework of understanding that emanates from the European and North American perspectives that currently dominate the field of dance studies in the UK. For instance this meant that differences in approach to the appreciation of dance that are important to traditions in South Asian and Egyptian dance were only viewed from the perspective of the artists rather than from the perspective of a fuller study of those dance traditions. This had the benefit of highlighting the difficulties for those artists presenting work that drew on 'non western' traditions but at the expense of fully understanding the traditions on which they drew.

Consideration of the above led to the following research aims:

1. To develop a broad overview of some approaches to the concept of 'embodiment' in dance studies and in the fields of philosophical aesthetics, anthropology and sociology;
2. To explore the implications of the above in an investigation of the appreciation of dance;
3. To explore 'embodiment' further in the context of the acts of making and appreciating dance by 'non aligned' dance artists working in contemporary London.

1.2 Initial Development of the Research Method

If defining the conceptual parameters of the research was difficult enough, even more problematic was the question of how to develop a research method. What was required was one that allowed for in depth reflection of the concepts of embodiment and appreciation in relation to dance whilst situating this within a shared framework that drew on the experience of others. If too much focus was placed on my own theoretical reflections there was a risk of losing a sense of wider relevance. Or, conversely, given as wide a field as dance performance in London, there was a danger of losing sight of the theoretical complexities in an attempt to be as inclusive of as many different perspectives as possible. However, I came to realise that the questions of what artistic and theoretical approaches to include, rather than being thought of as two different issues, could be usefully interrelated: by focussing on the issues that arose from the consideration of the perspectives of dance artists working in London, the theoretical context could be derived, in part, from their concerns. In developing a framework for interdisciplinary research, reflections from one perspective might lead to findings that could be further pursued within a different area drawing on different research methods. As the dance anthropologist, Andrée Grau, has observed in relation to research with Pan Project (Grau, 1992, 10), the point of interdisciplinary work is not to work from the basis of one subject area, bringing two or three others into it, but to create something new. Recognising that I was pursuing research that was neither based in the field of philosophical aesthetics whilst drawing on anthropology and sociology, nor could be identified as ethnographic research that drew on aesthetics and sociology, I worked to develop a method appropriate to my specific concerns about dance. In recognising that contemplating dance can lead to a crossing of disciplinary boundaries I was in part following in the

tradition of choreological studies developed by the dance educator Valerie Preston-Dunlop (1998). This framework draws together insights from as far afield as aesthetics, anthropology, phenomenology, physiology, psychology, and semiotics to inform dance students about their art. Such a breadth of approach has not been achieved without criticism of its lack of 'parameters' (Mackenzie, 1990) but has been an effective solution to the practical problem of educating artists whose central focus is necessarily bodily being.

The research method I developed drew on some interviewing and observation techniques used in an ethnographic approach. Following Adrienne Kaeppler's distinction between anthropologists and dance ethnologists, it was clear that in her terms my investigation would draw on the practices of the latter, who 'study context...primarily to illuminate the dances' on which they focus (Kaeppler, 1999, 16). In contrast to most dance ethnologists, it was unlikely that I would undertake extensive participant observation as I was not envisaging only considering the work of those whom I could dance alongside. Even if artists could have been found who would let me dance with them, the logistical implications of being trained and knowledgeable enough to undertake this would have restricted the scope of the research to those dance forms I had trained in, or necessitated many years' study to establish a working knowledge of a wider range of dance. That I was intending to draw on my previous experience in working as a dancer/choreographer within the context I was exploring meant that I would be approaching the research from the perspective of a sometime 'insider' in addition to the 'outsider' perspective. Within dance research generally there is a developing tradition of 'dance ethnography at home' (Koutsouba, 1999) while in Britain, the sociologist Helen Thomas and the folklorist and dance ethnographer Theresa Buckland have revealed ethnography to be a valuable

method for researching dance nearer to home than the far flung locations associated with the anthropological exploration of 'other' cultures. Buckland for instance studied a particular form of folk dance, the Britannia Coco-Nut Dancers of Bacup, Rossendale, in the North West while Thomas, working in London, has used an ethnographic approach to study 'the meanings of social dance for groups of participants who are entering or have entered what has become known as the "third age"' (Thomas, 2002, 54).

In discussion of another of Thomas' projects, a study of youth and community dance groups in South East London, her ethnographic methods are allied to those of Clifford Geertz. From Thomas' discussion of Geertz's concept of 'thick description' it is clear that in this approach, ethnography is in itself an interpretative act. Geertz himself stressed the importance of viewing the analysis of culture as being 'not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning' (Geertz, 1973, 5). Developing my reflections on appreciation and embodiment in tandem with limited ethnographic research would still mean that whatever conclusions I arrived at could not possibly be considered as all encompassing, or even as an 'objective' representation of others' views. Rather, my analysis would be dependent on interpretation of others' views. Yet, through careful choice of the artists whose views would be considered, and by allowing for their discussion of my views, it would be possible to ensure that my personal reflections were subject to the rigours of a more reciprocal process: my findings would emanate from a particular point of view, but in relation to the chosen focus they would benefit from the elements of intersubjectivity built into the research, that is as long as the perspectives of the artists involved were sufficiently different to mine. The important question then became how

to draw on artists' perspectives and, given the number of London based dance artists, on whom to focus.

1.3 Choice of Research Participants

The choice of participants was in part guided by my own experience of working in London and, in addition, informed by other writers' observations. For instance, in the field of dance studies Gay Morris draws on the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's discussion of how agents develop strategies to further their dance activities in relation to the amount of 'capital' (economic, social or cultural) they possess (Morris, 2001, 54), while dance anthropologist Judith Lynn Hanna offers an account of dance in urban environments:

Greater opportunity for a creative element to develop tends to exist in the urban area.....

[but] 'The less a dance conforms to the norms of urban decision makers or high status groups, the less likely it is to survive unmodified and/or to be widespread in an urban area.

Hanna, 1979, 227

Such considerations combined with reflection on my own observations suggested that those London based artists whom I termed 'non aligned' (not creating work for established touring companies) would be most likely to be interested in investigating how their physical presence might be understood and how their work relates to the norms of what they perceived to be the status quo of 'established' dance companies. Further, it seemed likely that those who might feel they did not quite match what could be regarded as the generally established norms for dancers would be most likely to be willing to discuss such norms and what assumptions might be thought to sustain them.

A benefit arising from this approach to the choice of participants was that while within the field of dance studies there is a reasonable amount of literature about how established dance artists have approached, or still are approaching dance, less is available about emerging and less well known artists. If not written by established choreographers themselves, there are many texts that include their ideas through direct quotations. In terms of those working today, information about the choreographic approach of most artists presenting work nationally and internationally can be found quite easily, if not in academic texts then in promotional material. So, for instance, in addition to accounts of or by key artists from the past, we can read Merce Cunningham's comments about his use of chance methods and what Steve Paxton has to say about contact improvisation. However, perhaps only a few lines in a programme exist for their less well documented counterparts. Moreover, with rare exceptions (such as Cunningham and William Forsythe) dance artists themselves are more likely to talk about how they approached making a specific work than how, in more abstract terms, dance is understood or appreciated. Such a topic is left for critics and aestheticians and the emerging specialist dance theorists.

In part, my choice of participants was guided by who might be willing, prompted by me, to reflect on their experience of dance in relation to embodiment and appreciation. While initially I had proposed to advertise to find people willing to be interviewed, I eventually decided to discuss issues with people I had met through working in dance. Since what I was asking people to do was to reflect on their own work quite deeply, I felt uncomfortable at the prospect of interviewing artists I did not know or towards whose work I had a negative response. I thus chose to talk to people with whom I already had some rapport.

At the beginning stages of the research my main focus was on choosing a range of people in terms of gender, ethnicity and tradition, so that different experiences would be drawn on. This led to my being less aware of the factors that led me to consider why I felt it would be easier to establish the mutual trust needed to explore some of the issues I would be raising. It was only later in the research process that I recognised this related to what the artists have in common and that this would emerge as important, revealing a specific point of view that shapes some of the findings.

Amongst those artists I did know and respect, I chose initially to enter into discussions with six artists who could be expected to present a diverse range of viewpoints. As can be seen from the descriptions below they draw on a range of dance forms and, while all now are British residents living in London, they come from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Although I was reticent in actively searching for information about 'class', there may be a correlation between ethnicity and differences in the economic status of their family background in that the two British African Caribbeans and the American born dancer of 'Hispanic' ethnicity seemed to have been the most affected by financial hardship when young. However the artists share some important features in common. First of all they make work in which they dance themselves which, in relation to the research, served to minimise some of the theoretical difficulties associated with the dancer's role in interpreting (or these days even co- authoring) the work of a choreographer. If an artist was performing their own work, we could discuss their performance in relation to their own approach to making work and not have to consider the role of an absent third party, the choreographer. They also all have in common that they are quite mature artists who are developing their

working practices outside the arena of established dance companies. All of them being well over thirty, places them at odds with a general emphasis in the dance sector on a youthful physicality. In addition, for a variety of reasons none of them quite matches what might be thought of as the idealized dancer's image. Upon reflection as the research progressed I realised that what I found interesting in all the participants' work was what I perceived as a tendency not to fit easily into established norms for dance but to create dances that seem to articulate unique visions. Moreover, what began to emerge, although was never overtly stated in formal interviews, was what perhaps could be described as a sense of integrity combined with a vision of their artistic practice as rooted in a holistic attitude to the self, even if that sense of self was fluid. While making them more likely to give as honest (if not always fully revealing) answers to my questions as possible, such a position perhaps makes them, as a group, more inclined to link artistic and ethical considerations than might be generally found.

What might be termed the artists' ethical approach seemed broadly in line with the performer and feminist scholar Ann Cooper Albright's (1997) account of 'contemporary' dance discussed in chapter four. Although focussing on 'contemporary' dance, the work she discusses tends to reflect the outlook of those who may perceive themselves to be in opposition to 'the mainstream', their work drawing, for instance, in part on their identities as gay, black or disabled. Reading Cooper Albright, in preparation for the research, reinforced my curiosity to see the extent to which the artists I interviewed were conscious of their position in relation to the mainstream and the potential significance of their own embodiment.

1.4 Details of Project Participants

Some of the artists wished to stay anonymous: in addition to their individual privacy, it became apparent that what was discussed drew on issues that had wider implications than what might be considered purely personal. The dance community being quite small, some artists felt that those who they have worked with, or for, might (mis)interpret their comments negatively and anonymity permitted a level of candour that otherwise they might have been worried about. For ethical reasons it was important not to publicise someone's point of view that they only wanted to share confidentially.

In order to distinguish between the different interviewees and to provide some context for their points of view, some information about them is offered below. This is drawn from the artists' responses to the same questions. Variations in how they are described and the amount of detail or insight offered into their work thus reflect what they wanted to say rather than judgements on my part.

Artist A

A white female choreographer, in the forty to fifty years age range who after early training in ballet studied for four years at Laban. Artist A's own work is in the field of mixed-media, working with dance and video.

Artist B

A male choreographer, British African Caribbean, aged between thirty and forty who started dancing as a young man in clubs in the north of England where he grew up. He later trained in a dance college in ballet, jazz and 'contemporary' dance but continued dancing in clubs and creates work drawing on this background in addition to elements from other dance traditions and what he observes in everyday situations.

Nina Anderson

A female artist of African Caribbean ethnicity born in the UK, aged between thirty and forty years old. Nina Anderson's early enjoyment of, and interest in, dance led to her seeing a performance of Egyptian dance and then formal training for nine years at the Hilal School and Raqs Sharki society. She expanded her dance training to include, ballet, 'contemporary' and jazz dance and theoretical studies which informed the development of her own research into 'movement performance psychology' and Egyptian dance, the latter drawing on approaches outside her earlier training. Anderson describes her solo performance work as drawing on different styles within Egyptian dance, trying to keep a link to a traditional source but in a contemporary context. She is also currently developing ideas to bring her writing into a performance context and recognises that her experiences in dance have helped her in this.

Artist D

A male dancer and choreographer, aged between forty and fifty who describes his ethnicity as 'Hispanic'. He began training in Graham technique aged seventeen, and then moved on to study Limon and Cunningham based techniques. His work is informed by Alexander technique and somatic disciplines which he started studying at the age of 19 and continues to do so. He made the following comment about his work:

I would like to think my work transcends my racial make up but is just an accumulation of 42 years of trying to exist within my condition (Hispanic, gay, male living far from family and roots).

Gaby Agis

A white female dance artist aged between forty and fifty whose initial dance background began with 'slightly conventional' 'contemporary' dance followed by 'a lot of improvisational work, releasing, voice, contact and visual art'. This artist described her work as:

Structured with elements of improvisation within performance. Site [is] very important to the placement of the work. Collaborators involved in sound, visuals, though have a big influence on the process and product - including the dancers.

In addition Agis stated:

[I am] Interested in when, how, why work is made-The cycles of creations! The unfolding! Sometimes work can take three to four years to make. [Does it] feel usual in the dance world to take time?

Sushma Mehta

A female artist aged over sixty who describes her ethnicity as Indian, Sushma Mehta undertook traditional training in the UK from Priya and Pratap Pawar for many years with occasional master classes with Kumudini Lakhia, Saswati Sen and Pandit Birju Maharaj. Mehta enjoys working with contemporary themes. She states that the core of her work is in the movement vocabulary of kathak:

I like to stretch its boundaries to encompass the theme. I often use creative movements from other physical disciplines as appropriate. My aim is to keep a balance between preserving traditional material and making new works by deconstructing and re-structuring the movement vocabulary of kathak, using it as an eloquent means of artistic expression. My teaching involves passing on the traditional repertoire to the students.

1.5 The Initial Research Process and Clarification of Research Questions

In preparation for the initial interviews I worked to clarify my understanding of the conceptual issues surrounding embodiment and the appreciation of dance that are discussed in chapters two and three. In particular this preparation brought to my attention how different writers on embodiment were exploring various, potentially interconnected dualisms. Reflecting on this research and my own experiences of dance training and performance, I was interested in how those creating dances to be performed by themselves approached the interrelationships between the subjective experience of the embodied self and awareness of being the object of another's gaze. This then became the focus of what, following Hammersely and Atkinson's (1992) [1983] use of Malinowski's terminology, might be termed a 'foreshadowed problem'. The planned discussions however were not intended to 'prove' a

particular account of embodiment. Rather I planned to explore how some artists viewed this relationship to inform my theoretical approach.

I viewed the participants in the research as fellow dance professionals and potential co-researchers. As I did not want to inhibit the participation of those less well versed in current cultural discourses, the first series of discussions were planned by preparing a framework of initial questions in quite general, everyday language, asking not about 'culture' and 'embodiment' but about what influenced the artists' work, how they set about creating, their experiences of creating and performing and of audience's responses to them. This ran the risk of seeming vague and imprecise (and perhaps precise answers in relation to embodiment were lost) but it was important to signal that it was the participants' views and experiences that were important, rather than that these were viewed as subordinate to theoretical constructs.

The initial series of discussions all took place between December 2002 and June 2003 and were tape recorded. I had suggested the artists forward video, pictures and articles that they thought would inform me about their work. This was not a popular option. However two women brought video to the interview and all of them knew I had seen them perform in their own work. Each discussion started according to the basic planned format but varied in duration, location and atmosphere. Although I had a prepared list of questions (see appendix one) and commenced with the first set question, the discussions then took different turns. The planned questions started with an exploration of the artist's dance background and then moved on to their experience of the relationship between their embodiment and their dance and then to an examination of the significance of their dance. I attempted to cover this in one session which was contrary to the suggestions of Seidman (1991,

11-12) who proposes a three interview structure covering relevant life experiences in the first interview, details of the relevant experience in the second and reflection on 'the meaning of their experience' in the third. This difference in time structure that does not maintain boundaries between experience and significance may account for why, even with a prepared structure, the discussions took markedly different routes through the subjects suggested. However, what I experienced was that in the process of each discussion, since the subject matter drew on personal issues, there were variations in how much and when people would share their experiences and concerns with me, especially while being recorded. Moreover, I wanted the focus to be on the artists' understanding of the significance of their actions. To this end, rather than follow the planned questions rigidly, it was useful to pick up on words or phrases that the interviewees used, asking them what they meant by them. This would tend to lead towards broaching a subject that had initially been planned for later in the discussion.

Similarly the original plan was changed since while in some situations it was easy to ask direct questions about sensitive issues, in others more time might be needed before raising these issues. For this reason it was sometimes useful to share some of my experiences, or to enter into discussion about other issues that arose. That I had closer personal relationships with some artists than others, together with variations in location, contributed to these differences. Listening to the discussions I noticed that the more 'different' and less familiar the participant to me, the more reticent and nervous I was. The most marked contrast was between a quite chatty, relaxed, over one hour long discussion, that took place at the home of Artist A, a female of similar age and cultural background with whom I have worked creatively, and a shorter, more tentative questioning of Artist B, a male whom I know less well,

who knows me as an administrator rather than as an artist and, as I later learned of his background 'off the record', whose early life experiences were very different to my own.

Reflecting on these discussions, I began to appreciate how these artists talk about dance. Rather than a striving for a rather linear, academic clarity there is a tendency to metaphor and the poetic. Sometimes artists answered what they had (correctly) understood as the subtext of my question rather than the question itself. Often they mixed the perspectives of performer and audience member, switching subject positions mid sentence. (Most of these were clarified in the editing process so that they relate to one clear perspective, but I found these initial slippages indicative of a way of thinking rather than of a lack of clarity). In turn I found it was sometimes easier to discuss issues with them as 'dancer to dancer', rather than maintaining some sort of 'distance' by sticking to my prepared script. This flexibility in relation to my prepared structure led at times to my becoming rather too interested in my own ideas which inhibited the artists' response and meant I ran the risk of encouraging them to give me the answers they thought I wanted, a risk heightened by our existing relationships within the context of the dynamics of the dance sector. However, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1989) [1983] discuss in relation to ethnographic research, the phenomenon of the effect of audience is always an issue. While undoubtedly my relationship to the artists will have had an effect on what they said, this may not all be negative. While their existing relationships with me and knowledge of my interests may have led to their giving a different emphasis to what they said, if the artists had not known me they might not have been willing to say as much. Whoever they talked to, they would certainly have had some, perhaps imagined, idea about what was expected of them. For their part, the artists seemed to take the discussions

very seriously, trying to explain their experiences accurately and correcting themselves if they felt they had not used the most appropriate word, even if it was one I had used previously. Their later attention to the final editing process also offered a chance to address any issues of imbalance in the earlier discussions and to minimise the risk of my misrepresenting their views to serve my own agenda.

Even so, to a greater extent than perhaps is common in research based on interviewing techniques, these factors indicate that my voice was already 'present' alongside those of my participants before I reflected further on the findings. It is very much my interpretation of what was communicated that is revealed in the following account of what I perceive to be important themes that emerged. Therefore the rigour of this research methodology cannot be claimed to lie within any objectivity of my interviewing techniques but in the clarity with which I have reflected on a combination of my own and others' viewpoints to explore the issues I perceived to arise. In order to reflect my active participation I have thus written about this element of research as based on 'discussions' rather than on 'interviews'.

The importance of such reflexivity is recognised in many current ethnographic studies. Charlotte Aull Davies, for instance, argues for an ethnographic approach that 'embraces its intrinsic multi-layered reflexivity without turning inward to complete self-absorption' (Aull Davies, 1999, 25). Her approach recognises the importance of recent (poststructuralist) insights revealing the power/knowledge distortions of underlying metanarratives, and aims to draw attention to multiple perspectives. However Aull Davies is wary of falling prey to an extreme relativism that is ultimately destructive of the attempt to undertake ethnographic research (Aull Davies, 1999, 6-25). Aware of these issues I was

attracted to the concept of dialectical anthropology developed by the anthropologist John Blacking. As described by the dance anthropologist Andrée Grau this is,

...a process in which there is an exchange between analysts and informants which brings into play two kinds of technical knowledge and experience, and in which informants share the intellectual process of analysis.

Grau, 1992, 6

While in the limited use of ethnographic research planned within an interdisciplinary context I could not achieve such a process fully, I ensured that the artists involved had the opportunity to feed back to me on what I had written and where possible, in the next stage of the research, this informed some future discussions and at the very least led to the artists reviewing and editing what I had concluded from discussions with them.

Reflection on the initial series of discussions helped to further clarify the focus of the research and it was at this stage of the research that I was able to re-formulate the focus of my project to arrive at the following research questions:

Within the context of dance as a theatre art presented in London -

1. How might consideration of embodiment contribute to the appreciation of dance performances?
2. What issues does such consideration bring into focus?

1.6 Refining the Research Method

These questions informed the development of the research. From the first set of discussions I was already aware of some key issues that had emerged in relation to the dance artists' understanding of the significance of their embodiment. Ranging through cultural diversity, class, age, approaches to gender and sexuality, globalisation and the conditions of late capitalism, embodiment in relation to any of these topics could be a thesis in itself. I was aware of a sense of scratching the surface in order to exemplify the relationship between embodiment and appreciation. Yet it seemed important to try to draw on all these aspects, not least because I came to recognise how they were interrelated with one another. Research into these contextual issues was carried out in preparation for further discussions. This period of the research stretched out over two years (2004-2006) and unlike the previous interviews was less formally organised.

The choice of the artists with whom I would enter into further discussion drew on my increasing recognition of the fact that discussing issues with artists from different dance and/or cultural backgrounds was beneficial in encouraging me to contemplate issues from a range of viewpoints. The three artists (Nina Anderson and Artists B and D) participating in these further discussions shared some common ground with me, but each was influenced

by experiences, both in dance and life more generally, that were very different to my own. In terms of these differences, most obviously two of them were male, one of them drew on a 'non western' dance tradition, another on aspects of 'Black' dance traditions and all three of them were of a minority ethnicity. In terms of similarities, one had an interest in anthropology, one had studied at ballet school at a similar time to me, and another worked within the field of 'contemporary' dance and shared some similar attitudes in terms of the work we both enjoyed.

It took me some time to recognise how my method for pursuing the research was related to my understanding of the subject: in relation to the appreciation of dance I was investigating the interplay between phenomenology and semiotics; in terms of the research method, by 'reflecting backwards' on my own experience of dance, in tandem with my discussions with other artists, I could contemplate what assumptions shaped my understanding and appreciation of what I had experienced; my phenomenological experience of dance was explored with reference not only to the views of others but to writings on subjects as diverse as dance, aesthetics and society. Initially, I had been concerned at how my research methods strayed across seemingly discrete approaches to the relationship of self to world and had been intent on tightening up on the theoretical context that informed them so as to present the outcome of a coherent view of the relationship between self:world. However I began to recognise that the ambiguity of how this relationship was constructed reflected the focus of my study. My interest in how dance artists (and often also their audiences) negotiate between the different ways of approaching dance was in parallel with my approach to the topic. For instance, in the field of ethnography, I came to discover that while Geertz promoted a 'semiotic' conception of culture' (Geertz, 1973, 5) his

concept of 'thick description', influencing my approach to the research, itself leaned on the philosopher Paul Ricoeur's approach to anthropology which combined phenomenological description with hermeneutic interpretation (Geertz, 1973,19). Moreover, reading Merleau-Ponty's key phenomenological text (1962) [1945] I began to recognise how the traces of phenomenological thinking influence not only the concept of multi perspectival description but also understanding of the significance of culturally delineated bodily habits.

As in the choreological approach developed by Valerie Preston-Dunlop (1998, and with Sanchez-Colberg, 2002), it was important to draw together different ways of experiencing and theorising about dance. Preston-Dunlop's work also reveals an issue that became another important concern for the research. While allowing theoretically for variations in interpretation depending on 'past experience and present expectations' of the spectator (Preston-Dunlop, 1998,11) at times Preston-Dunlop seems to suggest that meanings are fixed in relation to the choreographer's intention; for instance, on the subject of Ashton's Symphonic Variations (1946), a plotless ballet created for the Royal Ballet, she claims: 'Its content is Ashton's belief in classical tradition, the relevance of classical order and beauty' (Preston-Dunlop, 1998,15). This statement hints at what was to become one of the problems for the research: how could the significance of dance be both the product of the intentional acts of individual artists and of the interpretative acts of audiences enmeshed within signifying systems? This question was to raise a number of methodological and philosophical issues concerned with the ontological status of dance and the manner in which its significance may be dependent on the reciprocal interrelationships between dancer, audience and the cultures within which they are meshed.

This was the theoretical context in which I began to feel more confident about allowing myself to explore how I and the artists experienced dance. Trips to see dance with one or more of the artists, a discussion of dance on video, observations of the artists in rehearsals and/or performing and informal discussions about their own work all informed this stage of the research. Having started to read around the issues to which the previous discussions had referred, I also returned to the earlier transcripts recognising the significance of remarks that previously had not been considered as warranting particular attention. By referring back to previous discussions some of these follow up discussions could be quite short, but to the point. As the research progressed I felt that the formal recording of discussions was inappropriate as discussions would veer off into areas 'off the record'. Instead I took notes of key points, sometimes checking a particular statement for a 'quote' but more often hoping that the sense I had of what was being communicated to me was not too one sided.

Only mid way through the research, as I reflected on what I understood to be embodied in their work, did I come to recognise how perhaps intuitively, while on the surface choosing participants seeming very different to me, I had selected those with whom I shared certain viewpoints. In the early stages of planning the research, I had envisaged myself in the later stages as being cast more in the 'outsider' role as I identified specific movement and postural organisation in the dance of others and through questioning elicited their possible significances. In fact what these stages of research delved into was shared assumptions about how movement embodied significance and, despite our differences, what we understood about the broader cultural context that shaped our appreciation of dance. The reciprocity of this

relationship perhaps is best exemplified by Anderson's giving me a book on reflexive ethnography which informed my understanding of my research method. It also emphasises that the artists can themselves be considered as researchers in their respective fields, their work culminating in performance rather than a written textⁱⁱⁱ. From what might be called 'our' collective perspective, the research thus reflects values that we share in relation to the arts and that ultimately shape the findings presented at the end of the research. The point of view put forward in this research, is thus just that, one approach to issues in dance appreciation shaped by a nexus of complex interactions between personal experience and social conditions. The drawing on seemingly different perspectives does not offer any promise of additional validity but did, as part of my methodology, build in a degree of intersubjectivity and served to deepen my reflection on issues where there was a danger of my inattention to what might be (dis)regarded as 'given'.

As the research was beginning to draw to a close, a discussion about my interest led to an opportunity to observe some classes in August and December 2006 at Independent Dance (a London based organisation for London based independent dance artists) and to take part in a discussion on practice in December 2006. This provided an invaluable opportunity, not only for further observation of practice, but a chance to test out some of my findings. The December 2006 discussion replaced my original plan to share my findings with artists not involved in the research. Those participating in the Independent Dance workshops and discussion represented one group of 'non-aligned' artists, those working in a specific area of 'contemporary' dance that draws on techniques such as contact improvisation and somatic body practices that emerged out of alternative dance practices in the 1960s and '70s. Since the participants in this group seem to be predominantly white and

middle class, this opportunity also served to balance the research in terms of the focus I had given to the artists from minority ethnic groups in the previous stage.

In part due to adopting, albeit in a limited sense, a dialectic approach to dance anthropology (Blacking, 1977, Grau, 1992), it was important to the research process that the participants had the chance to review and discuss what I had written and edit what I had cited from our discussions. However there were also ethical considerations. As the research progressed, the distinction between what was 'on' and 'off' record blurred in our discussions. Even the boundary between what was a discussion linked to the research and what was personal communication was not always clear and I was determined that while I might let 'off the record' comments inform my interpretation of discussions about the research, I did not want the artists to find I had cited, even anonymously, something they had meant to stay confidential. While this may mean some of my conclusions appear less supported by evidence from artists' statements than they might have been this, for me, within the framework of this project was not a problem: this research was a means to interrogate my assumptions and draw on others' perspectives in order to develop my understanding of the relationship between embodiment and appreciation rather than to prove a particular correlation between culture and the significance of a dance.

I found that disseminating what I had written to the participants was useful in that this mitigated my having misrepresented their words. In addition, while admittedly some did not always pay much attention to what I had written, others came back with questions and ideas that furthered the research. While in the interaction between me and the artists there was a possibility that I

contributed to ideas that informed their statements, the chance for them to later see what I had written led to chances to review their own words and my interpretation of them. Particularly as the research neared the end, the artists were all very conscientious in trying to ensure I had represented their views correctly and to this end suggested small changes where it was felt I had overemphasised a point or misunderstood the subtleties of what they thought. This reassured me that their input to the process had its own rigour which supported that of the research process as a whole.

As one artist pointed out, in the time between her interview and the chance to participate in the editing process her own thoughts had continued to develop (Agis, 2007) and some changes reflected the artists' own development of ideas. For their part, occasionally discussions would affect the artists' work. This was particularly the case where conversations related to observations of rehearsals where artists were particularly concerned about how others viewed their work and might act in response to comments made.

While the research seemed broad in scope, drawing on aspects of philosophical aesthetics, anthropology and sociology in addition to approaches to dance as an art, in theoretical terms what slowly emerged was a need to develop a focus for my research method that viewed the same problems from the perspective of different disciplines. In as much as elements of the research drew on ethnographic methods I recognised why one ethnographer warns 'any statement about culture is also a statement about anthropology' (Crick, 1982 cited in Davies, 307). As I struggled to understand the relationship between the dancer and the appreciation of dance, I had to contemplate how I understood the relationship between individual and society, self and other, viewer and viewed, subject and world.

Ultimately it seemed to me that these questions resulted from the same ontological and epistemological problems, or at least how in a particular time and place it is possible to think about them.

The complexity of the relationship between self and other is important to a discussion of the appreciation of dance, not least because the tradition of (western) aesthetics in relation to art seems to depend on a complex interrelation between a work of art, subjective aesthetic experience and what can be publicly agreed. In his account of the history of aesthetics, Monroe Beardsley, writing in the 1960s, was able to show how aesthetic theories were, in each period up to and including the early twentieth century, intrinsically related to their contemporary philosophical approaches to questions of mind, knowledge and ethics. Hence the influence of Cartesian rationalism can be seen in the late seventeenth century poetics of Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux (Beardsley 1966, 141). Similarly, the epistemological conflict between rationalism and empiricism provides the context for the concerns in Enlightenment aesthetics with how to respond to a work of art that appeared to follow the established (a priori) rules of art but the experience of which did not provide the expected (aesthetic) enjoyment (Beardsley, 1966, 146). While the nineteenth century focus on the felt experience of the individual is hardly out of context within the development of liberalism and modernity.

In a study of the present, it is likely that views about how art is to be appreciated will be bound up with current concerns with mind:body:world and the relationships between them. Without the benefit of hindsight it is hard to catch hold of which particular themes and issues are most influential, but this project has tried to reflect on some of them that currently appear important.

The present, however, is not viewed as cut off from history but rather as intertwined with the legacies of the past. From such a framework the ambiguities and complexities of how the relationships between mind:body: self:other:world are viewed in themselves could be understood as embodied in dance.

ⁱ The term 'genre' is used by Hodgins (1988, 72-77) to distinguish between 'different types' of a particular category of dance that are 'collectively distinct'. Ballet would thus be a genre within the broader category of 'theatre dance' that could be subdivided into different styles of ballet such as pre romantic, romantic and classical.

ⁱⁱ The topic was proposed before 11.09.01 and renewed concerns in the aftermath about 'multiculturalism'.

ⁱⁱⁱ However, this might change as Anderson is interested in pursuing academic research while Artist B has an ethnographic interest in collecting video/film records of jazz dance.

2

Exploring ‘Embodiment’: Issues in the Appreciation of Dance

2.0 Introduction

Reflections on my experiences of watching, studying, performing and teaching dance and organising dance events have led me to consider that what is experienced as embodied can often be significant to the appreciation of dance. Sometimes as in the kathak based works of Sushma Mehta and the Egyptian dance of Nina Anderson, dancers draw on different traditions and even other ‘ways of being’ that at first can make it hard for those accustomed to ballet and ‘contemporary’ dance to appreciate their work other than in relation to its ‘difference’ or skilfulness. However, while knowledge of particular cultural traditions and (as will be discussed in chapter three) experience of particular cultural embodiments are important, to regard dance as simply embodying what is culturally ‘given’ is an oversimplification. Hence an Ethiopian dancer, performing in South London (Morley College, 1996) for an audience knowing little about his dance or the traditions informing it, could be appreciated not only for the agility, intricacy and rhythmic clarity of his performance, but also in that he seemed to embody a delight in moving: his whole bodily way of being infused with this pleasure and conveying a willingness to share his enjoyment that communicated to his audience.

Such experiences have led me to contemplate that investigation into the relationship between embodiment and appreciation might prove fruitful in relation to understanding some conflicting viewpoints that have emerged in relation to the appreciation of dance presented in the (western) theatre. In

order to undertake such analysis it is important to consider the terms 'embodiment' and 'appreciation' as they are used in relation to the arts and specifically dance: clarity in relation to the differences in approaches both to the appreciation of dance and embodiment is necessary in order to consider the relationship between them. That the concept of embodiment has become popular in three different, yet relevant, contexts adds to the complexity of such an analysis: From the perspective of the dance practitioner, it is the 'lived experience' of 'embodying the dance' that is important; in the fields of anthropology and sociology emphasis is placed on consideration of cultural embodiment, while in philosophical aesthetics it is rather the question of how the significance of the work of art may be considered to be embodied that is central. In this chapter it is this last that will be emphasised. Exploring some of the approaches to appreciation that have been, or are, important to (western) theatre dance will inform consideration of the different ways in which significance may be viewed as embodied in dance. However, it will be seen that in consideration of an ecological approach to art, the embodied acts of artists within a broader cultural framework that is itself embodied become part of a nexus of reciprocal interrelationships within which the work of art may be understood. Further, consideration of what are often considered as oppositional approaches to appreciation in relationship to each other may help to elucidate the ways in which how art is appreciated is itself part of a cultural legacy.

2.1 Appreciation

Consideration of appreciation in relation to the arts has a long tradition that, within western society, can be traced back to the writings of the 'classical' Greek philosophers from the fourth and fifth centuries BC on the nature and functions of art and beauty. Favoured by twentieth century philosophers in the

field of philosophical aesthetics, the term 'appreciation' tends to include some sense of making artistic 'judgements' that are dependent on sensibility or 'taste'. In this antecedents are revealed in eighteenth century discussions of taste and, in particular, in the complex philosophy of Immanuel Kant. The development of modern western aesthetics draws much of its foundations from Kant's Critique of Judgement (1790) and, certainly in Britain, the writings of Kant are still widely referred to in academic discussion of aesthetics such as those presented in the British Journal of Aesthetics. His legacy is not only confined to the understanding of the foundations of philosophical aesthetics. For example, by pointing to new considerations of Kant's aesthetics, the dance scholar, Sara Houston, has argued their relevance to recent practices in community dance (Houston, 2002).

Kant's description of aesthetic delight distinguishes it from pleasure in what is agreeable or good. For Kant, the judgement of what is beautiful is aesthetic, disinterested, unbounded by concepts, experienced subjectively but of universal validity:

This explication of the beautiful can be inferred from the preceding explication of it as object of a liking devoid of all interest. For if someone likes something and is conscious that he himself does so without any interest, then he cannot help judging that it must contain a basis for being liked [that holds] for everyone ...
Hence he will talk about the beautiful as if beauty were a characteristic of the object and the judgement were logical (namely a cognition of the object through concepts of it), even though in fact the judgement is only aesthetic and refers the object's presentation merely to the subject.

He will talk in this way because the judgement does resemble a logical judgement inasmuch as we may presuppose it to be valid for everyone. On the other hand this universality cannot arise from concepts. For from concepts there is no transition to the feeling of pleasure or displeasure...It follows that since a judgement of taste involves the consciousness that all interest is kept out of it, it must also involve a claim to being valid for everyone, but without a universality based on concepts. In other words, a judgement of taste must involve a claim to subjective universality.

Kant, 1987 [1790] 54 [212]

Drawing on Kant's analysis, aesthetic experience thus distinguishes aesthetic judgements from the non aesthetic. Further, this distinction serves to distinguish between the fine arts which are aesthetic and the 'agreeable' arts 'whose purpose is merely enjoyment' (Kant, 1987 [1790] 172 [305]) and under which category, on Kant's terms come entertainments such as story telling and 'table' or background music (Kant, 1987 [1790] 173 [306]). Crafts too, by virtue of their often being pursued for mercenary rather than aesthetic ends, are likewise distinguished from the fine arts.

The aesthetic experience is described by Kant as a sensation of 'the facilitated play of the two mental powers (imagination and understanding)' (Kant, 1987 [1790] 63 [219]). In spite of the subjective nature of aesthetic experience, by virtue of their disinterestedness, aesthetic judgements are structurally related to ethical judgements: in as much as subjective interest is curtailed, they should, according to Kant, be universally agreed. Moreover he also suggests that 'the beautiful is the symbol of the morally good' (Kant, 1987 [1790] 228 [353]). In general terms Kant's legacy is the sense that aesthetic appreciation is based on some sensation or emotion, but is distinct from the subjectively agreeable and should be universally valid. More specifically, aesthetic experience is 'disinterested' and cognitive and is what

distinguishes the experience of the 'beautiful' in the arts as opposed to pleasure in what is (merely) entertaining. For dance this distinction suggests that dance presented as a social activity (for example ballroom dance) or as (merely) entertainment (as in musicals) is of a different order to dance which claims its primary purpose to be aesthetic, the enjoyment of which is thus thought of as 'disinterested'.

Kant's distinction between the aesthetic and the sublime may also be influential in considering the difference between the appreciation of art and nature. According to Beardsley, for Kant the focus in art is on the beautiful whereas the experience of the sublime seems to be reserved for those experiences of nature where the faculty of judgement rather than 'generating the feeling of beauty out of the harmony it finds in relating the imagination, in its free play, to the understanding, ...generates the feeling of the sublime out of the *conflict* it creates by relating the imagination, even in its fullest exertion, to the reason and its transcendent ideas' (Beardsley 1975, 220). Whilst the reasoning behind Kant's distinction may be forgotten, the distinction between the appreciation of art and nature remains. Hence for dance to be valued as art there may be an expectation that it is of a different order to movement that is 'natural'.

Aesthetics has been through many transformations since the eighteenth century. Through different fashions in aesthetics, 'appreciation' of art has gained connotations that draw variously on placing different emphases on the attribution of value, interpretation of expressive qualities, coming to an understanding, responding to formal/structural properties and/or tracing contextual references. Yet traces of Kant's ideas may often be found, particularly in further accounts of 'disinterestedness', such as in Bullough's

(1912) discussion of approaching art with 'psychical distance' and 'Stolnitz's (1960) discussion of the 'aesthetic attitude'. The importance of 'universal subjectivity' in Kant's aesthetics may also suggest the notion of the potential universal agreement about what constitutes art. In the next chapter sociological theories underpinning arguments against such universality will be explored; these will raise the possibility that the aesthetic attitude itself emanates from a style of being assimilated by members of particular cultural groups. Thus while philosophical aestheticians such as Beardsley have argued that art works may be defined by their 'potentiality' to engender aesthetic appreciation this may limit 'art' to the culture of those groups.

Perhaps due to sensitivity towards such issues in a diverse society, recent approaches to supporting the arts in Britain have tended to ignore the 'aesthetic' and instead focus on 'artistic quality'. For example the Arts Council of England's most recent outline of policy never mentions aesthetics but is concerned with quality alongside many explicitly social concerns such as participation (especially amongst children and young people) and 'celebrating diversity' (Arts Council of England, 2006a). However, while the Arts Council recognises 'there are different ways of assessing artistic quality' (Arts Council of England, 2006b), the significantly higher proportion of arts funding supporting ballet and established forms of 'contemporary' dance (discussed further in chapter five), which are rooted in the artistic values of the nineteenth and first part of twentieth century, suggests older aesthetic concerns may not be as redundant as recent Arts Council policies might at first indicate. This is not to suggest there is lack of awareness of the blurring of the boundaries between art and entertainment, or what might be termed 'high' and 'low', or 'mass', culture. Nor is it intended to ignore that challenges to conventional aesthetics have led some theorists (most notably, Dickie,

1974) to posit institutional theories of art whereby art is what art institutions say it is. Rather it is suggested that while the distinctions are blurred, even played with in much contemporary practice, the legacy of older aesthetic ideals is significant: dancers in western society will usually know when they dance whether their performance is primarily presented as art or entertainment, as social activity or as intentionally blurring still recognisable boundaries. While theoretically (and politically) it may be difficult to describe the difference between appreciating dance as art and as entertainment, and as much as people may in some quarters grumble that the pressure to make the arts accessible has minimised any distinctionⁱ, it is suggested that assumptions about the role of the aesthetic in distinguishing art underlie categories that dancers seem to understand: if their dancing comes under the 'art performance' category, however much other elements may feature in the performance's success, there will be an expectation that there is 'something else' to appreciate 'beyond' the physical attractiveness and skills of the dancers, their ability to entertain the audience (including the use of physical 'tricks') or the social contribution of their dance. On the other hand any dancer auditioning for a musical, pop video or advertisement will recognise that the key factors in deciding whether they get the job would rarely be considered as primarily aesthetic. In relation to dance presented in contemporary London, the potential to engage dance/arts audiences aesthetically is, even in the twenty first century, likely to be implicit in its status as art as opposed to entertainment or social activity.

However, according to the British philosopher Graham McFee (2005), a further distinction should be made between the appreciation of art and other cases of aesthetic interest since not everything that can be appreciated aesthetically counts as art. His account helps to suggest how in the arts, in

situating appreciation in the context of traditions, including conceptual ones, art status is transfigurationalⁱⁱ. Thus the grace of the gymnast is contrasted with that of the dancer, since only the latter has art status. His use of the gymnast as an example recalls the grumbles of the early twentieth century choreographer Michel Fokine:

What is the difference between a dancer who executes thirty-two pirouettes and an acrobat who performs twice as many? I think that an acrobat does his with more certainty, but there should be another difference...

Fokine, in Beaumont 1981 [1916], 142

For Fokine the difference was to be found in expressive aims of the dancer, but following McFee's line of argument, the answer to this question might be that it is by the ascription of art status that the turns are appreciated within the virtuosic traditions in ballet and perhaps also in relation to their significance as suggestive of excitement (or some other relevant quality) within the narrative of the ballet. In this way institutional definitions that ascribe art status affect how work is approached and artistic (rather than merely aesthetic) properties are ascribed. McFee's distinction is useful in that it suggests that there could be occasions when the actions of a dancer might be appreciated as aesthetic yet the dance might not be considered as art. For instance, in the example of the dancer auditioning for a part in an advertisement, she might be chosen for her aesthetic 'look' or movement qualities such as 'grace' that are often considered aesthetic, but this would be outside the realms of what are usually considered to be art and thus these qualities would not, in this context, be artistic.

However, just as Fokine's aesthetic concerns place him within the artistic discourse of his time, so do McFee's. As another philosophical aesthetician,

Richard Shusterman (1997), has pointed out, a shift in the wider arts world towards conceptual art that demands consideration of its theoretical position in approaching it as art, has led to the turn away from the centralising of aesthetic experience. While agreeing that aesthetic experience cannot provide necessary or sufficient conditions with which to define art, Shusterman suggests that 'it might be regarded as a more general background condition for art' (Shusterman, 1997, 9). For the purposes of this discussion in relation to (western) theatre dance, 'appreciation' will be used to indicate that there is a presumption of there being reasons for a dance performance to warrant its being appreciated in relation to its qualities as art and that these, at least in part, will depend on traditions within western aesthetics in which there is a background expectation of potential aesthetic engagement. Thus while the potential for its aesthetic enjoyment is not seen as the defining criterion of a dance work being termed 'art', it is suggested that the assumption of such potential informs the institutional networks that sustain 'artworld' decisions as to what is art or not.

An approach to art that maintains the importance of a concept that has arisen out of the development of arts practices within western society may be felt to make the presentation of dance drawing on 'non western' traditions problematic. However, it should be emphasised that this approach to what is understood as art has arisen from discussions with artists about their experiences of working in the current cultural context. Further the consideration of the aesthetic is still important to the distinction that in practice is currently made between high and low culture. While perhaps political sensitivities ensure it is not stated too explicitly, that which is thought of as 'high' culture still seems to draw on what has been understood as 'aesthetic' in contrast to a 'low' culture that is 'merely entertaining'. Hence, as

will be seen in a discussion of Arts Council funding in chapter five, while at the level of political discourse in general terms all aspects of dance are embraced as art, patterns of funding suggest that those 'high' art forms that are perceived as potentially warranting aesthetic engagement are more likely to receive funding that recognises their qualities as 'art' rather than their merits in relation to encouraging participation in cultural activities.

2.2 The Concept of Embodiment in Dance Studies

'Embodiment', is a term that has recently become popular in a number of different academic disciplines. In discussion of the arts beyond the realms of phenomenology it seems to have become important in the 1960s featuring, for example, in the philosophical aesthetics of Louis Arnaud Reid (1969) and Monroe Beardsley (1975) [1966]ⁱⁱⁱ; yet in relation to dance its popularity is comparatively recent. For example in Reading Dancing (1986) Susan Leigh Foster's terminology is derived from semiotics; 'reading' a dance does not seem to necessitate consideration of what might be embodied. Yet a decade later in Corporealities the same author, while still developing a semiotic framework, sought to 'lend greater precision to our understanding of embodiment' (Foster, 1996, xi). By the turn of the century 'embodiment' had found its way into the work of key British based dance educators such as Valerie Preston-Dunlop (1998), Janet Adshead (1999)^{iv} and Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Ana Sanchez-Colberg (2002). Moreover, in their practice 'contemporary' dancers are increasingly asked to 'embody' the dance material. As will be discussed below, in one of the earliest references to 'embodiment' I have found in a discussion of dance, the philosopher David Best suggests this term is being used to disguise a dualist approach to body and mind (David Best, 1974, 188). Although I am not sure he is correct in the instance he cites, writing in the 1970s he provided a timely warning that

‘embodiment’ could be used to gloss over philosophical problems of mind:body in discussions of dance. Much of the lack of clarity in the use of the term may be tied to a confusion as to the relationships between a number of dualisms, not only mind:body, but also self:society, subject:object. It may also be that the rise in popularity of the term is a symptom of a growing awareness of the problem of a dualist approach to mind and body that informs many contemporary accounts of ‘embodiment’. This may be intended to counteract what Sondra Horton-Fraleigh (1987, 9) describes as a tendency in much early dance literature towards an ‘instrumental’ attitude to the body.

That, in Britain, the development of dance as a subject of study in Higher Education since the 1970s corresponds to a growing wider academic interest in bodily experience may suggest that the rise in the use of the term ‘embodiment’ in relation to dance is indicative of a continuing struggle to account for the experience of dance in a manner that challenges body:mind dualism. However, since there are differences in the conceptual starting points providing the framework for its use, it is likely that, as with ‘appreciation’, what is meant by the term is subject to variation. To explore further what may be meant by both these terms in discussions of dance, they will be discussed jointly in the context of different influential theories as they are presented in approaches to dance as a (western) theatre art.

2.3 Form Versus Feeling: Traditional Approaches to Dance

Until quite late into the twentieth century, theoretical approaches to (western) theatre dance were much concerned with the respective values of formalist and expressionist aesthetics. When originally formulated neither formalist nor expressionist aesthetics considered ‘embodiment’, as it is currently understood, but (as was discussed in the introduction in relation to

Beardsley's translation of Schlegel) the more recent term may be found to be applied retrospectively in discussion of previous approaches to the significance of art. Moreover since dancers, particularly 'contemporary' dancers, will talk of 'embodying the form' or of expression as embodied, and since formalist and expressionist aesthetics can be argued to have influenced much of the development of (western) theatre dance in the twentieth century, it is important to understand the influence of these approaches to the appreciation of dance as art.

Both formalist and expressionist aesthetic traditions are rooted in the writings of artists and philosophical aestheticians from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe, whose own works draw on various antecedents including aspects of Kant's aesthetics, and what are understood as the ideals of art in 'classical' Greece. These two versions of aesthetics are thus bound up within (or even legitimise themselves by reference to) traditions in western culture. In their extreme forms, they adhere to a universalism, not only in relation to the judgement as to whether they are aesthetically pleasing, but as to their significance.

An expressionist aesthetic, in the sense developed by the Russian nineteenth century writer, Leo Tolstoy, reveals art as a transmission of feeling leading to the aesthetic value of a work of art being bound up with the moral value of feelings it engenders:

Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that other people are infected by these feelings and also experience.

...it is a means of union among men, joining them together in the same feelings, and indispensable for the life and progress toward well being of individuals and of humanity.

Tolstoy, 1975 [1898], 123

Tolstoy was anxious to create art for the 'people' and was concerned from the viewpoints of both ethics and aesthetics that the focus on the 'beautiful' had been reduced to serving, what in his terms, was the perverted taste of the upper classes of western society (Tolstoy, 1975 [1898], 116). The ideals as espoused by the ancient Greek philosopher Plato, writing in the fourth and fifth centuries BC, had linked the beautiful with the divine (Plato, 1964 [not dated], 76-77 [211-212]). Later in the Enlightenment Kant, whilst recognising that those with aesthetic sensibilities were not always the most morally virtuous, proposed the symbolic virtue of the beautiful (Kant, 1987 [1790], 228 [353]). Tolstoy, however, was disillusioned with the result of the notion of art as the pursuit of beauty. He focussed on the moral worth of art, believing its value to be in the good effects it produces in others. His 'infection' theory of art may be seen to echo the classical notion of the moral benefits of tragedy advocated by the fourth century Greek philosopher Aristotle (1964 [not dated] 106-131 [1451-1386]). For ethical reasons, in what might be termed Tolstoy's strong version of expressionism, the communication of feeling became all important. Kant's 'subjective universality' of the aesthetic emotion was displaced by a belief in the universality of emotional content.

Although such extreme views are rare in contemporary academic discourse on dance, a loosely formulated expressionist aesthetic resulting in the idea that dance communicates some sort of inner life of the dancer, and/or

choreographer permeated much of what informed the development of early modern dance.

There will always be movements which are the perfect
expression of that individual body and that individual soul;

Duncan, 1902, 127

As will be discussed below, expressionist formulations may be dependent on a dualist approach to mind:body, a dualism that contemporary accounts of embodiment attempt to resolve. However, expressionist aesthetics may still underlie approaches to dance to this day: in the initial interviews for this research, one artist in particular was very clear that she was drawing on personal experience of her emotional feelings as a source for improvisational exploration of movement material to create a solo for herself. The movement material found this way was felt to come from a 'deeper level' than movement learned in class and to draw on her sense of her individual personality. In this way the source of the material was suggested as internal feeling in contrast to the forming of this material into a dance which was felt to be more 'cerebral' and brought in considerations of how the audience would view it. Drawing on this emotional source in performance was felt to be important so that the audience could 'cue into' the performer (Artist A, 2002). Although this artist's approach was the most concerned with emotional feeling as a starting point, the sense that audiences in some way connect with the emotion felt by the performer was a prevalent theme that will be explored in more detail in chapter four.

Artist A's approach in which feeling is drawn on to create what might be thought of as symbolic form, may reflect the influence of the theory of the philosopher Susanne Langer on approaches to dance in the degree courses set up in Britain in the 1970s and 1980s. Recognising the difficulties of the 'infection' theory of expressionism, Langer explored the realm of dance as art as offering a play of 'virtual powers' in which, while dance may consist of 'actual movement', what it expresses is 'virtual self-expression' (Langer, 1982 [1953] 31). Langer points out that dancers may draw on imagined feeling in order to create 'virtual gestures' but do not fully believe themselves to be actually dying, abandoned by their lover and so forth when they dance.

A form of expressionism may also be seen influencing the dance educators, Valerie Preston-Dunlop and Ana Sanchez-Colberg (2002). They developed the theories of the early twentieth century expressionist choreographer and dance theorist Rudolf Laban. Drawing on Laban's analysis of 'motion factors', they reveal how Laban viewed the dynamic content of people's movement as correlating to the four psychic functions as defined by Jung. This idea is then developed in relation to more contemporary concerns with embodiment and communication:

In terms of dance performance, his (Laban's) observations confirm that formal dances, which inevitably are created of content that contains dynamic changes in all four motion factors, embody as content the creators' intuitive, emotional, physical and mental functioning made evident in the movement's dynamics and read subliminally and intersubjectively by an observer/spectator. The proposal explains why formal dance material itself is never meaningless, irrespective of who dances it, but that it inevitably carries semiotic content of human nature in its form.

Preston- Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg, 2002,

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Thus for Preston-Dunlop and Sanchez-Colberg it is the particular 'effort' qualities that can be discerned in a piece of non-narrative choreography that are revealing of the particular psycho-physical make up of the creator. As dance practitioners, educators and theorists, the authors are aware that this is contentious ground and are careful to add a contemporary emphasis on the complex interrelationship between choreographer, performer, spectator and culture in constructing movement as meaningful. This formulation of embodiment draws on a particular 'choreological' approach that brings contemporary concerns with semiotics and phenomenology into play alongside a practice based theory that bears the traces of an expressionist approach to dance.

In contrast to expressionism, a formalist aesthetic, as described in early twentieth century accounts of aesthetics by Roger Fry and Clive Bell, posits aesthetic appreciation as an instantaneous and intuitive response to the formal properties of a work, which is entirely distinct from every day perception and experience:

The rapt philosopher and he who contemplates a work of art, inhabit a world with an intense and peculiar significance of its own; that significance is unrelated to the significance of life. It is world with emotions of its own.

To appreciate a work of art we need to bring with us nothing but a sense of form and colour and a knowledge of three dimensional space.

Bell, 1969 [1913], 92

This extreme version of formalism is perhaps historically best appreciated as a counter argument to expressionism. While in some ways formalism may

have been an attempt to retrieve the aesthetic sensibility as outlined by Kant, the notion of 'disinterestedness' has here been developed into a complete disjuncture with the realm of everyday significance. Kant did talk about the 'pure judgement of taste' as being in response only to form not content. However, in relation to fine art he brought in the concept of the 'aesthetic idea' that the philosophical aesthetician Paul Crowther (whose own aesthetic theory is discussed separately below) suggests, 'gives an "unbounded" aesthetic expansion to its own concept ' (Crowther, 1993, 79). Remembering that for Kant the special quality of aesthetic judgement is the manner in which the imagination and understanding are brought into harmonious play, the aesthetic idea can be an element of that which stimulates the 'free play' of mental powers and thus may contribute to the aesthetic experience. This then contrasts with the aesthetic formalism of the early twentieth century, in which the aesthetic response is confined to 'significant form', described by Bell purely in terms of 'the shapes of forms and the relations and quantities of colours' (Clive Bell, 1969 [1913], 93).

The American art critic, Clement Greenberg, also took up the formalist cause to champion the work of the American abstract expressionist painters of the mid twentieth century. Historically this was the point when America challenged the European dominance of western art and this may account for the domination of this particular formulation of Modernist aesthetics that, for example, is accepted by Copeland (2000). It is interesting that Greenberg situated his version of Modernism as developing from the intellectual legacy of Kant, a European who for Greenberg was 'the first real modernist' for his 'use of the characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself' (Greenberg, 1992 [1965], 754-755). Greenberg seems to have been

less concerned with the nature of the aesthetic experience than with the manner in which the work explored aspects specific to the medium.

Greenberg did not relate 'specificity of the medium' to dance and neither did Bell describe what 'significant form' would be in dance. However within academic dance studies consideration of dynamic and spatial forms in dance may replace concern with formal, medium specific aspects such as colour, line and surface in painting. The fact that they exist in performance rather than on a canvas may explain a tendency for dance audiences to interpret movement in relation to human experience. This has made formalism such as Bell's or Greenberg's difficult to sustain in relation to this art form. However, formalism, in a less extreme sense, has been most associated with 'pure' dance works in which there is minimal use made of the more obviously denotative or mimetic potential of dance, and in which use of design and/or sound often signal to the audience to focus on 'formal' features such as spatial and dynamic patterns. This aesthetic approach thus tends to have been favoured by those supporting more abstract, less personal approaches to choreography, whether in Ballet or Modern Dance. Its most lasting legacy is perhaps an antagonism in some quarters towards expressionist dance, towards dance that is too obviously pantomimic and towards interpretations of dance movement that over emphasise the correlation between meaning in dance and interpretation of movement in everyday life. Writing towards the end of the twentieth century, for instance, Roger Copeland berates those who would 'reduce works of art to their content' (Roger Copeland, 1990, 37). Copeland argues for a formalism that does not try to 'limit itself' to discussion of formal aspects such as line or pattern and ignore considerations of subject matter. Rather he emphasises a focus on the work rather than on the emotions one projects onto the work. In Copeland's updated formalism:

The meaning of the dance is concentrated into the sensuous surface of the dancer's body; the meaning is entirely *there*, which is to say, here and now, in this very space which we (as audience members) inhabit together. The dancers aren't representing another reality, whose essence lies elsewhere, beyond these particular bodies in some other place and time.

Copeland, 1990, 36

Like previous accounts of formalism, his account is dependent on the audience's ability to transcend the personal in order to achieve an act of 'disinterested' perception:

By preventing us from 'injecting our personal feelings' into the work, Balanchine forces us to transcend our own personal experiences thereby entering a shared and public realm.

Copeland, 1990, 36

Since Kant's time the notion that personal feeling leads to a striving for a shared realm as part of 'an original contract dictated by our very humanity' (Kant 1987[1790], 164 [298]) has been lost. One other important factor to consider in relation to formalism is that historically, in the McCarthy era of the 1950's, focussing on the specific properties of the art form distanced art from life at a time in American history when politics could be a matter of career life or death. Jonathan Katz, writing from the perspective of queer studies has explored how, in the McCarthy investigations, homosexuality was linked to communism, neither fitting in with the 'national consensus'. He further suggests that the gay strategy of 'the recontextualisation of the extant codes of culture' became absorbed into the arts more generally so that:

What was once a specifically gay mode of social negotiation, the closet, was articulated and figured across cold war culture...

Katz, 2007, not paged

In considering the dominance of aesthetic formalism in accounts of mid twentieth century American modernism, it may be important to consider that artists may have had a variety of reasons to focus the critics' attentions on form^v.

With reference to the medium of dance, contemplation of the distinction between expressionist and formalist aesthetics may also lead to consideration of the apparent polarisation of 'empty steps' or 'meaningless

virtuosity' and 'natural expression'. For example, within ballet at the beginning of the twentieth century Michel Fokine's approach to creating works for Diaghilev's Ballets Russes showed the influence of his readings of Tolstoy:

The ballet renounced expression and consequently dancing became acrobatic, mechanical and empty. In order to restore dancing its soul we must abandon fixed signs and devise others based on the laws of natural expression.

Fokine in Beaumont, 1981 [1916], 136

Fokine's dislike of 'empty' acrobatics and traditions echo the ideals of earlier reformers of ballet revealed most famously in Jean-Georges Noverre's Letters of 1760 trumpeting the arrival of Ballet d'Action and in August Bournonville's criticisms of late nineteenth century Russian ballet as having lost the expressive heart of the Romantic Ballet (Bournonville, 1979 [1848], 581). Such concerns are found not only in history but inform contemporary discussions about the relationship between technique and creative expression. According to the dance writer, Sondra Horton-Fraleigh, there is a tendency for this relationship to be explored through what is an 'instrumental view of the body' belying a dualist approach to mind:body that has its roots in western philosophical traditions reaching back to Descartes (Horton-Fraleigh, 1987, 9). Interwoven through the history of (western) theatre dance can be seen a tension between form and expression that itself draws on the complexities of cultural formulations of the relationships between mind:body, self:world. Thus behind Noverre's (1975) [1760] tirades about the outdated conventions of classical dance lie the Enlightenment philosophers' debates between empiricism and rationalism. As the philosophical aesthetician Monroe Beardsley 1975 [1966] suggests, the rationalists (concerned with the given, or a priori, rules for art deduced through reasoning) came into conflict

with the empiricists (who rather attended to experience to establish knowledge a posteriori about the nature of the experience of aesthetic enjoyment) when a work that followed the rationalist rules did not result in the expected aesthetic enjoyment.

If Noverre's reforms were in keeping with the aesthetic concerns of his time, Fokine's approach to the significance of dance was in line with the turn of the twentieth century symbolist artists (Garafola, 1989, Carr, 1989). This movement can be viewed as attempting to resolve the apparent dichotomy between expression and form: seeking forms that correlated to some 'inner life', the symbolists believed these were, at some mystical level, universally communicable. Fokine's search for a resolution between virtuosity and expression thus relied on a belief in 'natural' laws governing the relationship between form and content.

Despite their antithetical viewpoints, a continued belief in the possibility of a universally 'shared and public realm' is, albeit in different ways, at the root of expressionist and formalist aesthetics and the symbolist tradition that grew out of them. In relation to 'embodiment' these 'traditional' approaches sustained a belief that what is embodied in a dance is objectively 'really there' to be perceived by those with the necessary sensitivity. In terms of 'appreciation' the Kantian emphasis on the subjective aesthetic experience as awareness of the free play of the imagination and understanding in responding to an object seems to have been sidelined. The expressionists shifted the focus to the response to emotional content, the formalists to the ability to distinguish formal qualities and, by resorting to mysticism, the symbolists combined the latter with the former.

2.4 Interpretation and the Problem of Expression

Although viewed as antithetical, both expressionist and formalist traditions led to an emphasis on the aesthetic qualities which, as Kant had warned in relation to beauty, have often been viewed as objective properties of the work rather than 'the object's presentation merely to the subject' (Kant, 1987 [1790] 54 [212]). After the mid twentieth century much aesthetic discourse shifted from a concern with the distinction between formalism and expressionism to develop a focus on seeking criteria for making aesthetic judgments. While there was considerable discussion of whether aesthetic properties could be considered as objective features of a work (see for instance Sibley, 1978 [1959], Meager, 1970) the argument focussed attention on the possibility of the discernment of aesthetic features of the work rather than the aesthetic experience itself. That some such qualities were viewed as expressive may be one reason why a focus on interpretation came to the fore, in which it was implicit, if not explicitly stated, that some interpretations were better than others and that these could be supported by reference to the discerning perception of aesthetic properties. For example, in dance the influence of this approach can be seen in the development of methodologies for dance analysis in which 'skills of discerning, describing and naming' underpin analysis of the dance work and 'any statements of the character of the dance, or reference to its aesthetic qualities' (Adshead, 1988, 41 and 181).

Linked to an interest in interpretation were concerns about the popular, expressionist conception of dance as expressive of inner feelings. Influenced by Wittgenstein, David Best, writing in the 1970s, attacked this notion. He identified it as revealing a dualist view of the relationship between mind and body and a misconception about the nature of meaning generally, and specifically in relation to movement and the arts. According to Best 'meaning

as naming' leads to the mistaken view that the expressive meaning of a movement depends upon its symbolising, or 'standing for' inner emotions expressed by the person moving (Best, 1974, 23). He is thus critical not only of infection theory expressionism but of Langer's 'virtual expression'. He points out that her thesis still separates form and content leading to a resort to intuition as the source of knowledge of what is symbolised (Best, 1974, 185).

Best's critique of 'meaning as naming' is important to a discussion of 'embodiment'. The question of meaning often lies at the heart of approaches to the interpretation of movement in performance. In many approaches, including the traditional expressionist and formalist theories touched on above, there is a sense of an essential, in some way, knowable meaning, whether this is to be recognised as an emotional truth, cognised through appreciation of form, intuited through perception or revealed by analysis. Following any of these strategies it could be reasoned that meaning is set physically in the body in movement. Best however warns against a concept of meaning that is dependent on words, movements or symbols standing for something we can point to. In this way he avoids a concept of 'mind' or a mental event such as feeling as a thing, which neatly circumvents the problem of two substance dualism: mind being different conceptually to the idea of a physical body offers Best the means to escape the difficulty of the relationship between two entities, mind and body.

Although Best's discussion centres on the problem of expression, his argument relates to those uses of 'embodiment' that would seem to suggest that inner beliefs, ideals, even feelings are embodied in movement. Indeed,

towards the end of Expression in Movement in the Arts, Best turns to Louis Arnaud Reid's account of embodiment, citing Reid's assertion that:

To "see" character in a person's face, in his posture and gesture, is neither to perceive his body only nor to apprehend his character through his body, but to apprehend one single embodied person with distinguishable aspects...

To feel happy, or anger, or at ease or in anxiety, is neither mental only nor physical only, but psycho physical. The aspects are indivisible and convey the idea of meaningful embodied experience.

Reid in Best, 1974, 188

Best is in sympathy with Reid to the extent that both disagree with the behaviourist view that character and emotion can be discerned 'scientifically' so that the verifiable facts of behaviour *are* the emotion. However Best challenges what he views as the implicit assumption that there are two entities, feeling and body, however closely Reid's theory binds them together. Best is suspicious that the use of the term 'embodiment' in the writings of Reid rather than 'expression' is symptomatic of the underlying theoretical difficulties of Reid's position. For Best, Reid's view still leaves the question as to the grounds for knowing that feeling is embodied. It is Best's assertion here and elsewhere that this kind of question leads to realms beyond those that can be communicated or shared publicly; the result of straying into the realm of the intuitive is, according to Best, the loss of a possible publicly shared understanding of art. Influenced by Wittgenstein's notion of 'seeing as',^{vi} Best prefers to focus on the act of perception as interpretation:

The point is that to see character in a person's face is not to see the mental embodied in the physical, it is to interpret his physical expression.

Best, 1974, 188

For Best, physical behaviour is a criterion of feeling that is interpreted in relation to the context of the physical behaviour, or in relation to movement in performance, to the whole setting and performance of a dance and our knowledge of those traditions. In spite of his distrust of the term 'embodiment', where Best states 'the physical movement incorporates the expression of emotion' (Best, 1974, 46) he perhaps could replace incorporates with 'embodies' as long as it is made clear that, for Best, movement is interpreted within a cultural context rather than intuited with reference to some mystical or otherwise mysterious realm. In this light it might be proposed that the significance of what is embodied is dependent on the interpretative act of 'seeing as'.

Best's approach to expression is not without its problems. Certainly shifting attention to the criteria for interpretation of feeling rather than on the inferring of 'inner' feeling from 'outer' behaviour is logical. Yet his account of behaviour as a criterion of feeling may appear to be at odds with what dancers and choreographers say about what they do. Best allows for this by suggesting their accounts can be meaningful to them while not being philosophically accurate. Writing as a dancer, I cannot help hoping however for a theory that holds itself less at arm's length from what artists say it feels like to create, rehearse and perform. Best may also be felt to neglect the importance of a range of senses in the appreciation of dance as his account of interpretation is very visually orientated and he takes pains to dismiss the significance of the kinaesthetic sense (Best, 141-152) that is important to many accounts of dance, including Langer's. An emphasis on the visual may be appropriate to much of the dance Best experienced as an audience member. Yet, as Cynthia Novack's account of contact improvisation points out (Novack, 1990, 159-162), not all dance forms prioritise the visual. Best, in recognising that

not everything can be said about a dance and that, to some extent, art is 'an expression of unconscious feeling' (Best, 1973, 178), does seem to admit that his account is partial and may be felt to leave his readers reflecting on those aspects of their experience of dance that are difficult to put into words.

Graham McFee, also drawing on Wittgenstein, prefers to focus on what it is to understand rather than to interpret art. McFee, drawing on Wittgenstein's comments on understanding music, suggests that the point of explanation in relation to the experience of art is to encourage someone to 'understand' for themselves rather than to provide an explanation that stands in place of or interprets the work (McFee, 2001, 92-100). Thus however hard someone tries, they may not be able to help someone perceive what they do: the other person may not be able to 'understand' the work in the same way however well an interpretation might be explained to them. For McFee, following Wittgenstein, it follows that the ability to appreciate art is dependent on having learned how to recognise and apply artistic categories to respond to the work's artistic qualities (McFee, 2001, 100-110). In this light, to point out what is seen as embodied in a dance work can be a way of explaining an aspect of how a dance might be appreciated; whether someone else can then understand that depends on their being able to perceive what is embodied for themselves and, if they can, that it contributes to their experience of the work as art. McFee argues artistic values inform perception so that 'learning to see the work of art in question appropriately is learning what to see as valuable in it (or how to see it as valuable)' and hence learning to value it (McFee, 2001, 102). Appreciation on these terms is likely to be open to cultural variations and raises interesting questions about the potential for people to learn to appreciate different cultural forms. That McFee agrees with Wittgenstein, that people communicate about how they understand arts

though a range of means including non verbal ones, suggests how what may be difficult to say can still be brought into the public domain.

2.5 Phenomenological Approaches to Dance

With a focus on lived experience, phenomenological methodologies have attracted a number of writers on dance. A phenomenological perspective tends to highlight the limitations of analysing a performance 'after the event' and in particular draws attention to the difficulties of applying analytic frameworks that separate time-space-body-person to dance and performance. The principles of phenomenology were largely brought to the attention of those studying the developing discipline of dance studies by Maxine Sheets-Johnstone. In her 1966 account of phenomenological method, drawing on the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, Sheets-Johnstone emphasised the potential for a 'direct intuition' of dance as a phenomenon, a phenomenon that may be felt to correspond to the 'field of virtual powers' that Langer (1983 [1953] 36) described. In Sheets-Johnstone's account of phenomenology she aspires to a 'pre-reflective' consciousness of dance as the starting point for elucidating 'structures apparent in the phenomenon, forms existing within the total form of life.' For Sheets-Johnstone, this direct intuition can be 'apart from any prejudice, expectation or reflection' (Sheets-Johnstone, 1979 [1966], 12).

In Sheets-Johnstone's early work 'embodiment' is not an apparent concept since the term had yet to become prevalent. However, in her emphasis on the 'totality' of the body there is plenty to suggest an approach to embodiment:

Any lived experience of the body incorporates a pre-reflective awareness of its spatiality through the bodily schema...To apprehend the body is to live the body and

not to reflect upon it as a given object or as the sum and sequence of kinesthetic sensations.

Sheets-Johnstone, 1979 [1966], 22-23

On the purely physical level, the body as symbol is logically related to the actual human body... as pure appearance, as symbol, the body in movement is not intuited within the natural dimensions of the body...the body as symbol is related to the dancer's pre reflective awareness of her body...She cannot reflect upon her body in movement as an object and make it exist apart from the form she is creating, without immediately breaking the spatial unity and temporal continuity of the dance into discrete points and instants... If the audience reflects upon the dance as it is being presented, it destroys the illusion of force by dividing it into discrete moments and points and ascribing values which are non existent within the world of illusion.

Sheets-Johnstone, 1979 [1966], 45-46

It might be surmised from the above that for Sheets-Johnstone, at this stage in the formulation of her phenomenological approach to dance, the symbolic form of the dance is embodied in the lived body of the dancer and that it can be directly intuited by both dancer and audience. However this is dependent on dancer and audience being able to be pre-reflectively aware of the dance rather than reflecting on the dance as an object.

In introducing the reprint of The Phenomenology of Dance, Sheets-Johnstone herself recognised how her earlier work could all too easily be interpreted as revealing body:mind dualism (Sheets-Johnstone, 1979, xii). However, following the line of David Best's arguments referred to above, her phenomenological approach is also problematic in that, by emphasising the direct intuition of the phenomenon of dance, the act of appreciation of a performance could be said to have been removed from the arena of meaningful public debate. Arguably this is particularly noticeable because in

this account of phenomenology, the problematic nature of 'bracketing out' expectations or of reflecting backwards to elucidate the structures of consciousness is perhaps underplayed.

In a later work, Sheets-Johnstone argues that it is not the immediate experience itself that is presumptionless but that in phenomenological method it is 'in the reflective act that presuppositions within the actual experience come to light'. Having given oneself fully to the experience, it is in reflection that 'bracketing' takes place so that 'worldly beliefs about, or natural attitudes toward the phenomenon', are suspended (Sheets-Johnstone, 1984, 139). Sheets-Johnstone is careful to point out the distinction between this and the removal of the aspect of intentionality from the experience. In this later account of phenomenological method she emphasises that it is the 'essential nature' of the 'experience as it is lived' that is brought to light (Sheets-Johnstone, 1984, 138-139). Referring to the work of philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty she reveals an ambiguous attitude to the possibility of essential knowledge that, for her, underpins the transcendental phenomenology of Husserl: Sheets-Johnstone suggests leaving the question of 'essences' to those undertaking philosophical inquiry into phenomenology itself (Sheets-Johnstone, 1984, 141). However, she lays out what for her seems to be the crux of the problem: Merleau-Ponty's criticisms of Husserl are derived from the former's concern that 'world and humankind cannot be so separated as to yield a distinctly demarcated ground' (Sheets-Johnstone, 1984, 140); she suggests Merleau-Ponty thus 'questions the possibility of essential knowledge' but Sheets-Johnstone finds that he actually offers a 'foundational insight' into the ambiguity that is the 'essential character of human existence' (Sheets-Johnstone, 1984, 140).

Strongly influenced by Merleau-Ponty and pursuing an existential phenomenological line of enquiry, Sondra Horton-Fraleigh distances herself from what she also sees as Husserl's emphasis on the detached observer directly intuiting the form of a dance, preferring to highlight the impossibility of the observer's separation from the world (Horton-Fraleigh, 1987, 8). In her writings there is a more straight-forward account of the process of reflecting backwards than is found in the early work by Sheets-Johnstone, with a similar focus to Sheets-Johnstone's later work on applying the process of phenomenological reduction, or reflecting backwards, to reveal the assumptions contained in perception rather than to directly intuit a given form.

In her actual accounts of dance performances, however, it could be argued that what is the product of her individual interpretation at times seems to be presented as if it is more or less 'pure' description. For instance, in an account of Anna Sokolow's Dreams (1961) there is description of a section in which a girl tentatively finds her way over the shoulders of some standing men. Dreams is a work about which it is known that the choreographer has drawn imaginatively on nightmarish incarnations of the holocaust. Knowing this we are likely to interpret the girl as an Anne Frank figure trying to escape. There are good grounds for interpreting this progression over the men's shoulders, as Horton-Fraleigh does, as being crawling over roof-tops. However, I remember being struck, when I saw this work rehearsed and performed, by the fact that the men over whose shoulders she finds her way, have in an earlier part of the section been Gestapo like figures. As she slowly makes her way forward they maintain a very soldier like, mechanistic attitude as they peel away in twos from the back of the row to the front to enable the continuation of the image. For me this section was impressive because of the

ambiguity of this image. I was at least residually aware of the men below her as captors and this added to the nightmarish quality of the dance image.

Horton-Fraleigh's account of Dreams makes the dance live again in my imagination. I would argue that it is her imaginative response drawing on preconceptions that makes her account so alive. That her interpretation is slightly different to mine may be due to slight variations in the performances we saw, but I suspect it is also reflective of the different assumptions we both brought to our perception of the work. At the same time many of the similarities in our interpretations may well be due to the influence of what the choreographer has made known about her intentions. I am sure that Horton-Fraleigh is aware of the assumptions contained in her perception. Her account is not presented as a rigorous phenomenological description and does not preclude the validity of other interpretations. However, the reason that I have highlighted that Horton-Fraleigh's description is not the only possible interpretation is that there seems to be an ambiguity in Horton-Fraleigh's approach to the issue of validity that arises from her distinction between interpretation of dance and wordless communion with dance.

Drawing on Merleau-Ponty's approach to language as having a foundation in lived experience she states:

Since dance passes between the dancer and the audience in an intersubjective field, it is subject to many differing and equally valid interpretations. But a dance does not necessarily call for interpretation in words; it exists as a site for a wordless (yet poetic) communion.

Horton-Fraleigh, 1987, 74

This distinction between 'interpretation' and 'communion' could be viewed as informing the distinction Horton-Fraleigh makes between a sign as opposed to a symbol that stands 'for something outside of what it is'.

Seen as a sign, the dancer does not stand for anything outside of the dance or the vital presence of her dancing. She does not arise from the reflective 'I think' but from the existential 'I am'. She is embodied in her dance and signs it with her being.

Horton-Fraleigh, 1987, 252

Embodiment seems here to be linked to this act of communion rather than an interpretation of symbolic actions. In her account of how we attend to the dancer as a sign, Horton-Fraleigh again hints at an act of communion rather than interpretation stating:

We look behind the poetic image or symbol to our immediate communion with the dancer; we focus on the immanent and inmost hidden body, our expressive elusive body of dance. We pay attention to a silent mystery underlying explicit intention.

Horton-Fraleigh, 1987, 252

In a later work Horton-Fraleigh puts forward a view of human actions as embodying human intentions (Horton-Fraleigh, 1999, 193). This leads her to a discussion of 'intention as embodied volition' in which intention is seen as contained in actual movement rather than as a mental decision preceding action, and the dancer as embodying aesthetic intention:

Because it (dance) has an aesthetic intent, it involves us in intentionally created movement, which is meant to be transferred from performer to audience and grasped immediately through intuition.

Horton-Fraleigh, 1987, 167

Although separated by over a century of changes in culture, in this and in Horton-Fraleigh's stress on 'communing' rather than interpreting it is not difficult to sense echoes of something akin to an expressionist belief in the 'transmission of feeling'.

In relation to the problem of dualism discussed above in the context of Best's concerns in relation to expressionism, Horton-Fraleigh, drawing again on the work of Merleau-Ponty, proposes in the place of the 'absolute distinction of body and souls' found in traditional dualism, a 'bodily lived dialectic' (Horton-Fraleigh, 1987, 4-15). In this way she suggests a means of accounting for the

experience of separation of mind and body prevalent in discussions of actual dance practices while not accepting the metaphysical reality of dualism.

Horton-Fraleigh's account of existential phenomenology offers a view of embodiment that is bound to the domain of lived experience that is pre-verbal but that is reflected upon through language. By this process of 'reflecting backwards' some of the assumptions contained in the perception of dance can be examined, and this allows discussion of equally valid interpretations that inform the appreciation of dance and what is embodied in a dance.

However, it may also be felt that in an emphasis on wordless communion with dance there exist traces of an older aesthetic legacy informing a sense of embodiment that allows for significance that is communicated at some metaphysical level. Unless the metaphysical is accepted as given, this, in an academic context, is problematic. However, in focussing attention on the embodiment of intentionality, Horton-Fraleigh offers a description which matches many accounts of what dancers currently often say about what they do. Moreover, it will be seen in chapter four that the sense of communion she discusses is also important to artists. Thus the dancers' experiences of embodiment and of the 'connection' between audience and performer will need to be investigated further.

2.6 Semiotic Approaches to Dance

Semiotic analysis, or the study of symbolic systems, may be regarded as the oppositional counterpart to phenomenology. Rather than 'in the moment' intuiting of the phenomenon, semiotics offers the tools to analyse dance and performance 'after the event', reflecting on dance works in ways that parallel studies of written texts. Developments in recording techniques, whether through video or notation, have provided those following this approach with

the means to scrutinise structural relationships that are sometimes difficult to fathom in one 'live' experience of a dance.

Early structuralist semiotics that leaned heavily on the linguistic theories of Ferdinand de Saussure are problematic in application to dance as they are dependent on a clear, distinct relationship between signifier and signified. Except in more mimetic dance, establishing what is signified is difficult and perhaps reveals that Saussure's linguistics offers too narrow a model of communication into which to force dance. At a more general level, semiotics suggests that significance is a result of differences between signs and that signs are understood within the framework of their cultural context rather than being naturally invested with meaning.

One of the clearest accounts of a structuralist approach to dance emanates from an anthropological approach to dance rather than critical analysis of theatre dance. Drid Williams' 'semasiology' offers an adaptation of structuralist analysis applied to dance. Coming from a background in dance and anthropology she is concerned with developing a means of universal analysis for dances from different cultures. At the outset she distances herself from structuralist semiotics in its purest form when she points out the 'false dichotimization' of system and utterance, *la langue* / *la parole*. Similarly she is resistant to signifiant (concept) and signifier (action or sound image) being treated 'as if they were mutually exclusive' (Williams, 1995, 45). In her account of semasiology however, Williams adopts much of the language of semiotics: human movements can be analysed as 'action signs', the human body itself is a 'signifier'.

Williams identifies 'structural universals' which set the parameters for all human movement defining 'the limitations and constraints under which they operate in a locally Euclidean space' (Williams, 1995, 48). These consist of a 'structure of interacting dualisms' such as up:down, right:left, forwards:backwards; inside:outside which are seen as informing human value systems, spatial orientation being core to intersubjective understanding. Williams presents the idea that a difference between two societies in the hierarchical relationship between one set of interacting dualisms is enough to lead to differences in all their conceptions (Williams, 1995, 51). Thus in her structuralist approach to movement it can be envisaged how value systems might be viewed as embodied in a culture's dance. Although context bound, in theory at least, they could be perceived accurately by those with an understanding of the relevant cultural conventions. It would be likely that some might be so deeply embedded in a movement culture that they might well be perceived within that culture as universal or even not be noticed at a conscious level as carrying significance. Such an approach would thus support a view that it is possible to perceive values embodied in dance that the dancers are not consciously aware of themselves.

Drawing on approaches closely associated with literary theory, Susan Leigh Foster, utilises both structuralist and poststructuralist theories to formulate an understanding of the body's movement in dance as an 'act of writing' (Foster, 1986, 237). In Reading Dancing: Bodies and Subjects in Contemporary American Dance, Foster (1986) draws on theories that update the Saussurian relationship between signifier and signified to explore ways in which dance meanings are created. In particular Foster adapts the structural linguistics of Roman Jakobson. Jakobson analysed the act of communication in terms of the structural relationships between the person sending the

message, (addresser), the person receiving it (addressee) the context that is referred to (referent) the (common) code which is used and the physical/psychological connection (contact) between addresser and addressee that facilitates the act of communication. For Jakobson a shift in emphasis in relation to each factor accounts for the different functions of communication. Hence the 'emotive' is related to the concerns of the 'addresser' to express their attitude to what they are saying, the 'conative', is intended to be as precise as possible and orientated to the 'addressee', the 'referential' is focussed on the context, the 'phatic' function, is intended to maintain the channel of communication, and the 'poetic' throws attention on the message itself (Jakobson, 1997 [1960] 33-37). Foster however, develops an interpretative framework for contemporary dance that puts the emphasis on the role of the reader, or viewer, in producing the text. The skilled reader is guided by established codes and conventions that provide the context for the choreographic and performance acts that create the dance. For Foster, an understanding of the different ways in which dance can be meaningful is linked to choreographic conventions that are, in part, historical. Recognising that she is broadening Jakobson's theories, Foster maintains that the context of choreographic codes and conventions is itself embedded in a broader social and historical context that informs readings of a dance. Due to her emphasis on the interpretative role of the reader and the interplay of codes and conventions, Foster's approach to reading dance may be regarded as poststructuralist. However, one way to look at the distinction between structuralist and poststructuralist is that the structuralist approach to dance tends towards a sense that the meaning of movement is potentially knowable if it is understood with reference to its context. Whereas poststructuralist approaches to dance allow for, even celebrate, the capacity for works of art to generate multiple meanings. A tendency by Foster to define and categorise

just which codes and conventions the reader should bring into play in relation to a specific genre results in readings being more fixed than is usually the case with poststructuralist approaches and this would include any interpretation of what is embodied in the dance.

Henrietta Bannerman (1998) also draws on a combination of structuralist and poststructuralist semiotics to discuss the work of Martha Graham. Her analysis, developing upon terminology from Saussure and the semiotics of Charles Peirce and Roland Barthes, allows for movement to carry levels of signification which relate to culturally understood codes. With reference to Graham's work at the level of denotation, dance movements may be read in relation to clearly defined codes such as the narrative elements and a successful performance of a role might be said to embody the character's plight. However, Bannerman allows for variations at the level of connotation, recognising in particular how over time the Graham vocabulary itself gained different connotations (Bannerman, 1998, 138). She thus may be seen as accounting within semiotics for differences in what could be understood as embodied in Graham's dances.

Janet Adshead (1999) applies the poststructuralist concept of 'intertextuality' to interpreting dance. As a concept 'intertextuality' was developed by Julia Kristeva who, as a doctoral student, worked closely with Roland Barthes. The latter's proclamation of the 'death of the author' in 1968, together with Jacques Derrida's initial critique of the structuralist project in 1966, may be thought of as heralding the poststructuralist concern with deconstructing and destabilising the fixed hierarchical relationships of 'binary opposites' which are viewed as underpinning structuralist approaches to significance. For

Barthes, writing in 1971, 'Text is plural'. This he asserts is not the same as saying its meanings are several:

The plural of the Text depends, that is, not on the ambiguity of its contents but on what might be called the stereographic plurality of its weave of signifiers...

[This textual 'tissue' is]

...woven entirely with citations, references, echoes, cultural languages...antecedent or contemporary, which cut across it through and through in a vast stereophony.

Barthes, 1977[1971] 159 -160

For Barthes, as with Kristeva, the point is not to search for origins or sources to support interpretation but to recognise the place of the 'Text' within the 'intertextual in which every text is held, it itself being the text-between of another text'... (Barthes, 1977 [1971], 162).

Adshad views the dance as a 'text' that allows the reader, or in relation to dance, spectator, to be actively involved in the construction of the text. The text is seen as 'a series of traces, which endlessly multiply and for which there can be no consensus of interpretation' (Adshad, 1999, 8). Descriptions of a dance, for example, become texts in themselves and may become traces or 'intertexts' that in the reading of the dance as text are sources for the imaginative play which is the 'reading' of the text:

In this arena the reader's activity becomes one of unravelling threads, rather than deciphering fixed meanings, choosing which colour in the tapestry to follow, where and when to start, change direction and conclude.

Adshad, 1999, 8

In contrast to Barthes, Adshead's focus on interpretation leads to a debate about the extent to which a text defines plausible interpretations. For instance alongside some approaches which seem to allow for the open ended play suggested above she quotes Eco's assertion that 'you cannot use the text as you want but only as the text wants you to use it' (Eco, 1979 cited in Adshead, 1999, 4). Eco, writing about the same essay ('The Role of the Reader', 1979) states that he 'stressed the difference between interpreting and using a text' (Eco, 1992, 68). Further in this same discussion he clarifies the difference between reading a text within the 'lexical system' of the time and using it to show how it can be read in relation to different cultural frameworks. This distinction between interpreting and using texts also relates to his criticism of deconstructionist strategies that do not make sense in relation to the text as a whole (Eco, 1992a, 65). By drawing on Eco, Adshead seems to be suggesting a similar position to Jordan and Thomas by which intertextual references are used to explore the richness of significance offered by a text but do not extend to an opening out of an endless chain of signifiers.

In relation to 'embodiment' Adshead's version of 'intertextuality' can be seen to account for the 'embodiment of ideas outside the dance' (Adshead, 1999, 5). Interestingly, Kristeva's use of psychoanalytic theory to bring the unconscious and pre-verbal experience into the realms of intertextuality is not brought into Adshead's account. Rather, to support this view of embodiment Adshead draws our attention to two of her post graduate students' analyses that are included as chapters in the book. For example, dance scholar, Sherriil Dodds approaches the work of the British female choreographer, Lea Anderson. In Dodds' account attitudes and understanding of sub culture,

fashion and images from popular media all impinge on the 'reading' of Anderson's works. Dodds draws attention to how the dancers take on different 'looks' within a single work such as Cross Channel (1992). For her 'a series of interchangeable, mass produced images that are placed on the dancers for no apparent reason...' (Dodds, 1999, 219) is related to Fredric Jameson's notion of 'the death of the subject'. This text brings into play a critique of late capitalism and the role of the artist and the idea of the myth of the individual bourgeois subject. This 'death of the subject' is, for Dodds, also revealed in Anderson's use of unison and specifically in the manner in which every-day, quite personal gestures are repeated by more than one dancer.

In this way one can see how the dance can be seen to embody a particular point of view. Then, in keeping with Adshead's intertextual approach, Dodds reveals an alternative reading of Anderson's work which, by emphasising the different bodies of the dancers, reflects their individuality. For Dodds this individualism is 'superficial' but it allows for a tension between interpretations within the intertextual reading. The implication here for 'embodiment' is that what is perceived to be embodied is dependent on one of many 'intertexts' that can be drawn on to support a reading of a dance. Without more sense of how the act of dancing is implicated in a tissue of textuality, what is embodied thus seems curiously reliant on rather disembodied choices of textual references.

Poststructuralist approaches to dance have not been without their critics. Roger Copeland, for instance highlighted what for him were the dangers of some poststructuralist approaches to dance. In particular, partly reacting against what he reveals as a tendency of 'politically correct' American art institutions to criticise aspects of works that are out of keeping with feminist

and anti elitist agendas, he has warned against the tendency to make 'considerations of content primary':

Indeed, to reduce works of arts to their content (political or otherwise) is to lose sight of what makes them works of arts, rather than some other form of expression.

Copeland, 1990, 7

He is particularly concerned by Ann Daly's (2002) [1987] account of Balanchine's ballet The Four Temperaments (1946). By foregrounding the style of partnering, which is perceived in relation to a feminist political stance, she interprets the manner in which the woman's body is manipulated in a particular pas de deux as violent and sadomasochistic. Copeland offers an alternative reading of this work. He suggests the opening theme which introduces the classical vocabulary leads the spectator to view the 'very process by which the classical ballet vocabulary transforms flesh and blood human beings into abstractions' (Copeland, 1990, 36).

In another discussion of Ann Daly's (1987) article, dance academic Stephanie Jordan and the dance sociologist Helen Thomas draw on the work of Roman Jakobson to highlight the different ways in which dance communicates. They suggest that Ann Daly's semiotic analysis of The Four Temperaments is limited by being largely denotative, whereas recognising the poetic function of communication would make for a richer interpretation (Jordan and Thomas, 1998, 244). Ignoring for a moment Copeland's own assertion of formalism we might view both his and Ann Daly's 'readings' from the view point of intertextuality as revealing a tendency to focus on particular aspects of the work rather than fully appreciating the different and sometimes conflicting

texts that this ballet can bring into play within the complexities of the choreography.

Like Adshead, Jordan and Thomas celebrate the potential for the notion of intertextuality to give rise to multiple readings but pull back from a situation in which 'any account will do'. Jordan and Thomas in proposing the importance of the interplay between structuralist and poststructuralist analysis may be read as suggesting that it is the structural relationships perceived in the dance that provide the framework for a poetic interpretation that may draw on other texts, contexts and associations to enrich appreciation of a dance. As in Foster's approach, the relative value of different interpretations seems to be linked to their being informed by appropriate codes and conventions.

Not all poststructuralist theorists would be happy with this solution. The question to be resolved becomes which texts are focussed on and why? And, if what is perceived to be embodied in the dance is one 'text' alongside (or even dependent upon) others, is it simply a matter of preference how much consideration is given to such 'texts'?

In relation to appreciation, the notions of reading dance and tracing texts and intertexts provide the tools to analyse what informs understanding and perception, in the sense that perception is itself an interpretative act.

However, as Bonnie Rowell points out, intertextuality poses questions in relation to the value and validity of interpretations. Either the question of their validity becomes irrelevant or prioritising certain interpretations fixes the significance of the text, rather defeating the concept of intertextuality (Rowell, 2003, 236). Further, the problem for dance is that it can at times seem as if what is less easily accounted for in words is lost in a translation of dance into

text. In celebrating the reading of dance as text, both Foster and Adshead reveal the extent to which dance discourse has become concerned with interpreting, rather than understanding dance. In a cultural climate in which postmodern accounts often (at least at a surface level) seem to consign the aesthetic experience to history^{vii}, questions of judgement and value of dance as art may all too easily become linked to the concepts drawn on in analysis to interpret a dance. Adshead recognises the validity of concerns that over reliance on other disciplines can draw the focus away from dance itself, but points to the parallels between common debates in relation to interpreting dance and the concerns of structuralism, poststructuralism and semiotics. However, writing at the very end of the twentieth century she is confident that the trend of poststructuralist thinking generally, and the notion of intertextuality specifically, towards multiple interpretations is unlikely to be challenged (Adshead, 1999, 3-4).

2.7 The Concept of ‘Embodiment’ within an Ecological Theory of Art

Whilst in the context of intertextuality what is read as being embodied in a dance may be thought of as one text amongst many, in an ecological theory of art developed by Paul Crowther, human embodiment is central to the appreciation of all art, not only performance. Drawing on his readings of the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty together with an understanding of aesthetic traditions reaching back to Kant, Crowther develops an aesthetic theory that foregrounds human embodiment in the context of continual reciprocal interactions:

The artwork as symbolically sensuous manifold is able to express the decisive relation between subject and world (ontological reciprocity, as I have termed it) at a

level which does not obliterate the concreteness of the relation...The artwork, in other words, reflects our mode of embodied inherence in the world, and by clarifying this inherence it brings about a harmony between subject and object of expression- a full realization of the self.

Crowther, 1993, 7

On Crowther's terms the originality of a work of art is 'internally related to the existence of its specific creator or creative ensemble' (Paul Crowther, 1993, 187). The artist being caught up in a web of reciprocal relationships ensures that the work embodies more than the purely individual being of the artist. In this context, to appreciate art is itself an embodied act responding to what is understood as embodied in the art object through direct acquaintance with it.

Crowther does not relate his theory to dance but his work has been developed upon in relation to this area by Bonnie Rowell. In particular she reflects on the question of the subject:object relationship that in dance is complicated by the subjectivity of the performer:

When it comes to the special case of dance works, we are dealing with the notion of ideas being embodied within the artwork, but we are dealing with the added complexity – superficially at least – of the human physicality of the medium itself, the fact that what embodies the ideas are themselves intentional human beings.

Rowell, 2003, 213

To develop her account Rowell makes comparisons with Sondra Horton-Fraleigh's analysis of the relationship between audience and dancer. Rowell agrees that in a successful presentation of dance as art the dancer achieves a delicate balance between the subject of the dancer and the object of the dance. However Rowell disagrees with Horton-Fraleigh that the audience respond empathetically to the dancer as subject. This returns us to the earlier discussion of Horton-Fraleigh's account of the potential for communing with, as opposed to interpreting, dance. This sense of communing with dance (or dancer) is problematic, not least in that it takes the experience of a dance out of any publicly sharable domain. However, discussions with dance artists lead me to think that this notion reflects an important aspect of many experiences of engagement with dance:

For me, performers imbue the movement with some kind of meaning; that they bring something of themselves into the performance and they are the kind of performers that I like to watch.

Artist A, 2002

It may help here to explore what is meant by the 'ideas' embodied in dance. In the fuller context of her discussion of Crowther it is clear the 'ideas' Rowell refers to are complexes informed by Crowther's account of ontological reciprocity. Thus in her account of Mark Morris' 'Waltz of the Snow Flakes'

from The Hard Nut (1991) a nexus of sensory experience and personal and cultural references lead to an understanding of ideas embodied in the dance.

Turning to Crowther himself, in relation to his discussion of 'aesthetic ideas' his discussion of Kant develops upon Kant's presentation of the aesthetic idea:

The artist's imaginative presentation of the concept enables us to relate it to the totality of our being - to the values, aspirations, and possibilities of our own life, and that of humanity in general. This is no mere formal harmony of imagination and understanding, rather the imaginative manifold and its mediating concept open out, and, as it were, reopen our understanding of numerous related possibilities of experience and self knowledge. This is why Kant talks of the aesthetic idea being 'aesthetically an unbounded expansion' to the concept of its subject matter.

Crowther, 1993, 82

While the examples Crowther discusses are from literature and painting, Rowell's example of the Mark Morris' 'Waltz of the Snow Flakes' demonstrates the potential for dance to embody an 'unbounded expansion' of ideas playing on balletic and cultural conventions.

It may be possible that imaginative engagement with the dancer can contribute to the appreciation of aesthetic ideas. For instance, occasionally in watching a Romantic ballet it may be felt that a dancer is drawing on his/her own experiences of love and loss to reveal a depth of interpretation that seems more profound than other dancers offering up standard issue, white ballet tragic flutterings. If this sense becomes part of that play of imagination and understanding that, in Kantian terms is aesthetic, it may add to appreciation of the work. If however the audience become focussed on what

this tells them about the real life situation of the performer, trying to fix their perception to a concept of them as a person outside the performance, then they have strayed from enjoying the dance itself. The important issue for dance is that through imaginative engagement with the dance the audience may feel that they know what it is like to embody a different way of being in the world. Particularly in dance works which centre the focus of the work onto a few soloists this may include a sense of imaginative empathy with one or more dancers. If this experience contributes to aesthetic appreciation this is not a means to conceptualising aspects of their personality and culture outside of the dance, but part of that unbounded play of cognitive faculties that, in the tradition of western aesthetics, is an important part of immersion in the world of the work.

Embodiment on Crowther's terms allows for ideas to be embodied in the work by recognising the reciprocal relationship between subject and object. The audience come into their own reciprocal relationship with the work in order to understand and thus appreciate it. This is further complicated in dance by the role of the dancers whose own sense of selves interacting with whatever has been demanded of them in rehearsal and performance may also be understood as embodied in the dance. For this research this aspect is simplified by drawing on the experience of those who dance their own choreography. Their accounts will inform further discussion of what is understood as embodied in dance in chapters four and seven.

2.8 Cross Disciplinary Issues

In the next chapter I will draw on the disciplines of anthropology and sociology to look at some of the issues raised above. At this point however it

is important to note a certain artifice in the above attempt to clarify the 'embodiment' and 'appreciation' in relation to different approaches to dance. For the purpose of making clear distinctions I have focussed on key basic principles that distinguish the different approaches. When the texts I have drawn on are taken in their entirety these distinctions become far less clear. I have touched on how expressionist and formalist aesthetics still colour contemporary approaches to the interpretation of dance, but it is not only past aesthetic traditions that seep into more contemporary accounts.

For instance, although coming from very different perspectives, we may find echoes of Horton-Fraleigh's phenomenologically based discussion of 'intention as embodied volition' in Williams' structuralist account of the 'signifying body':

We have to conceive of human act/actions as embodied intentions and that we have to be able to see a lived space as an intentionally achieved structuring, something that has been willed or is now willed by someone or by some group of persons.

Williams, 1995, 52

Whilst the sense of dance as writing is most closely associated with semiotic approaches to dance, it is Horton-Fraleigh in her account of how the body becomes sign who draws our attention to how the body 'bears the tensions and scheme of the world' so that 'the world is thus inscribed in our dancing' (Horton-Fraleigh, 1987, 252).

Predating phenomenological accounts of dance can be found statements that prioritise the here-and-now experience of dance from choreographers more commonly associated with the debate between form and expression: '...art is

not to be understood as we use the term but *experienced*' (Graham, 1941, 36).

More recently, Valerie Preston-Dunlop, in developing the 'choreological' approach to dance, has emphasised a way of looking at dance from the different viewpoints of makers, dancers and viewers, drawing on a combination of semiotic and phenomenological theories in tandem with her development of Laban's movement analysis to offer rich insights into how dances are experienced (Preston-Dunlop, 1998).

These areas where the boundaries between disciplines break down make it hard to untangle different approaches to embodiment and appreciation. Similarities may well be the result of the process of adapting analytic frameworks to dance in a cultural climate in which everyday consciousness is suffused with a kaleidoscopic array of discourses emanating from an array of theories. However they may also reveal some of the more constant features of dance experience within the context of the contemporary western theatre.

The potential for the exploration of the overlap between different disciplines may be fruitful in terms of understanding the dynamics of reciprocity between subject:object in terms of dance. During their development dance artists, particularly those who dance their own choreography, learn to equate their 'in the moment experience' of dance to their own and others' reflections on that experience. This, in part, can be accounted for by the dancer relating their proprioceptive experience of dance to the visual images they see themselves create (via the mirror or video), and the feedback they receive from teachers, peers and audience. But from my own experiences as a dancer, choreographer and teacher I suspect the relationship between the dancer's

and the audience's awareness of the dance is more complex. My experience suggests to me that skilled dancers may be able to be aware of themselves as communicating by means of image or symbolic form while being 'present' in the moment of the dance. Perhaps it is the process of dance 'training' (in western culture) that means that dancers develop an understanding of the interplay between pre-reflective awareness and reflection of the self as a symbolic object. With practice is the dancer able to bring their imagined view of themselves into play with their in-the-moment experience of their dance, and also with their experience of the audience's response to their dancing? If this were the case such action within the context of (western) theatre dance might be seen as articulating something of the phenomenological experience of the legacy of dualism.

2.9 Embodiment, Appreciation and Language

To ask what is meant by saying something is embodied in a dance brings to the surface ontological questions about conceptions of self, world, the other people in it, and the relationships between them. The nature of these relationships is often viewed as diametrically opposed: in simple terms either what is embodied in a dance is understood as being dependent on the accurate perception of elements existing in the object of the dance or as being dependent on subjective interpretation. Crowther's account of art in the terms of ontological reciprocity offers an approach to embodiment that allows for what is understood as embodied in the work to be dependent on the reciprocity of the subject:object relationship. Understanding the actions of others by reference to an evolving consciousness the self, through immersion in a communicative ecology, is caught in a nexus of reciprocal interactions through which what is created, including dance, can be understood.

While it is important to be aware that the term 'embodiment' can be used to gloss over issues of body:mind dualism, understanding of 'embodiment', in the context of 'ontological reciprocity', is a useful means for trying to think a way out of the confines of the underlying dualisms that underpin the shared communicative frameworks into which western society may be felt to be immersed.

In terms of art, Crowther returns to elements of Kant's aesthetics in which while the understanding contributes to aesthetic appreciation, it is brought into play with the imagination (Kant, 1987 [1790] 63 [219]). The aesthetic ideas embodied in art may thus be thought of as related to but not bound by concepts. What is experienced in response to a work of art is the result of direct engagement with the work rather than the result of translation of the work. Language may be used to reflect on the response to a work, bringing the experience of the work into the arena of public debate. However, as McFee discusses, there are other means by which what is understood in a work of art may be communicated. There is also the possibility that structured movement memories are drawn on, in a similar way to verbal concepts, to create and understand dance ideas that are difficult to verbalise. Relying on such understanding in the appreciation of dance would bring proprioceptive perception or the kinaesthetic sense into the realms of aesthetics. As David Best's dismissal of the kinaesthetic demonstrates, this can be controversial. However, recent work in the field of philosophical aesthetics (Montero, 2006) suggests that proprioception may be regarded as an aesthetic sense informing aesthetic judgements about movement. That what might be called movement concepts may be difficult to talk about is not an argument leading to the conclusion that the significance of dance is shrouded in mystery, rather that just what is experienced as embodied in the dances we appreciate could

be reflected on more deeply^{viii}. By considering the day to day experience of movement interactions alongside more linguistically available references it may be possible to recognise more of what informs the perception, and thus the appreciation, of dance. To these ends the next chapter will consider embodiment from the perspectives of the disciplines of anthropology and sociology.

Notes to Chapter Two

ⁱ At an Arts Council Presentation (Dance Open Meeting, Sadlers Wells, 26 April, 2004) of their 'Grants for All' funding programme to individual artists and small scale companies, what was notable was that while artists not working with traditional (western) aesthetic values still felt marginalised, those artists whose work fell within those traditions but was not firmly established, felt threatened by what was perceived as a social agenda.

ⁱⁱ In the use of the term 'transfigurational' McFee's own footnote refers to Arthur C. Danto's 1981 text The Transfigurational of the Commonplace, Cambridge, Mass.:Harvard University Press.

ⁱⁱⁱ It is interesting in this respect that Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological account of art in 'Eye and Mind' [1961] was included in Harold Osborne's 1970 compilation of texts on aesthetics.

^{iv} This text was published under the name of Janet Adshead-Lansdale. In earlier texts the same author is identified as Janet Adshead and in later ones as Janet Lansdale. For simplicity her early name is referred to throughout this text while in the bibliography works are listed as published.

^v According to Franko (1995), that the expressionism of the Modern Dance of the 1930's has been over emphasised can also, in part, be attributed to the political context.

^{vi} This concept is discussed by Wittgenstein in Philosophical Investigations (part II xi pp165-194).He exemplifies the difference between the continuous seeing of an aspect and the 'dawning of an aspect' using the ambiguous duck/rabbit figure. The image does not change but what is seen – duck or rabbit – does, and this is related to discussion of the recognition of 'seeing as' in which it is understood that 'seeing as' consists of more than receiving sense data.

^{vii} Shusterman (1997,9) surveys some of the theoretical approaches underlying 'The End of the Aesthetic Experience' linking this to problems faced in contemporary art which 'having completed its philosophical transformation and lost the financial prop of eighties' speculation, now finds it has lost an experiential point and a public to fall back on'.

^{viii} Shusterman (1999, 302) posits a whole new subfield of aesthetics, 'somaesthetics', for the purpose of developing the body as 'a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation'

3

Exploring ‘Embodiment’: Some Anthropological and Sociological Perspectives

3.0 Introduction

The previous discussion explored some of the ways in which embodiment might be understood in the context of different approaches to the appreciation of (western) theatre dance. Elements of this discussion may well be illuminated by a consideration of some anthropological and sociological perspectives on the body and embodiment. At the risk of even further generalising some very complex philosophical arguments, I will first attempt to summarise some key points of the previous discussion before introducing some relevant aspects of a range of writings of anthropologists and sociologists and consider their impact on the understanding of what is embodied in dance. In particular, in relation to the intertextual analysis of dance, I will discuss the use of some anthropological and sociological texts to support interpretations that draw on considerations of social factors. Further, I will consider the dualist approaches to body:mind, technique:expression, form:content that I touched on in the previous chapter to be symptomatic of a conceptual framework that, dominating the development of modern Europe, has had an impact on the manner in which embodiment is experienced and the body is understood in dance.

3.1 'Embodiment' and the Aesthetic Appreciation of (Western) Theatre Dance

In early twentieth century western aesthetics there was a marked opposition between expressionist and formalist viewpoints, that is, between those that emphasised what the artwork expressed and those that viewed content as irrelevant to aesthetic concerns that were focussed on 'formal' properties. In both 'traditional' aesthetic approaches, the aesthetic qualities of a work of art, formal or expressive, were viewed as qualities of the work rather than their being dependent on the point of view of the percipient. Or rather, only the viewer with the appropriate sensitivity could appreciate the aesthetic qualities of a work of art correctly. Discussions of traditional aesthetics predate more contemporary discussion of embodiment. However, in some later developments of these traditions in relation to dance, aesthetic qualities may be viewed as embodied. In particular, some uses of 'embodiment' seem to echo an expressionist emphasis, in that expressive qualities may be viewed as embodied properties of a dance. The British philosopher David Best has suggested how a popular form of expressionism in dance, which views physical movement as expressing feeling, reveals a dualist attitude to mind and body. For Best, the use of the term 'embody' in the context of expression may only serve to obscure this underlying dualism. Further he posits the importance of interpretation, or 'seeing as' in the perception of expression (Best, 1974, 188).

Debates over the importance of form or content were, as the twentieth century reached its later decades, perhaps overshadowed by the development of phenomenological and semiotic approaches to dance, each emanating from academic disciplines that have often been viewed as antithetical. Phenomenological approaches to dance have been developed

by Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, whose theoretical basis owes much to the transcendental phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, and by Sondra Horton-Fraleigh. The latter draws on the existential phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty that emphasised the 'lived', embodied nature of phenomenological experience and challenged the idea that phenomenological method can transcend separate acts of perception to unify the experience of phenomena (Moran, 2000, 208). Emphasising the intersubjective nature of interpretation, Horton-Fraleigh suggests that at the 'symbolic' level a dance may be open to different, yet equally valid interpretations. However, she also suggests a sense by which the audience can 'commune' pre-reflectively with what is embodied by the dancer as 'sign' (Horton-Fraleigh, 1987, 252). To this extent her account may be viewed as problematic in that (as with Maxine Sheets-Johnstone) she may appear to continue in the essentialism of traditional aesthetics. However, this sense of communicative connection between dancer and audience seems to be important to dance artists and thus warrants further exploration.

In contrast to the phenomenological emphasis on the 'lived' experience' of dance, in semiotic approaches to dance as 'read', questions of interpretation and significance are central. In simple (and overly oppositional) terms, semiotic approaches may be viewed as structuralist or poststructuralist. In the former, a dance performance may be viewed as a structural field of signs (here the term is used differently to its use in phenomenology) that are comprehended in relation to specific cultural (or sub cultural) contexts. These may include the choreographic traditions informing dances and the expectations and conventions surrounding any specific performance. In theory, at least, the significance of the dance performance may be elucidated through a synchronic, structural analysis which might refer to cultural norms

as embodied in the movement and understood from the perspective of a specific cultural location. Hence in Drid Williams' (1995) 'semasiological' analysis, similar actions of bowing are not only understood as slightly different in terms of whether the legs are turned out or how deeply the body bends: depending on whether they are performed within the ballet Checkmate (1937), the celebration of Mass or in the Chinese exercise regime of Tai Chi Chuan, the actions also differ in relation to their meaning as constructed within different structural systems of signification. In contrast, poststructuralist approaches, and in particular intertextual analysis of dance in which the dance is viewed as a 'text', open up the potential for multiple interpretations and the role of the percipient in (co-)creating the work. As interpreted by Janet Adshead, from this perspective different readings of a dance rely on the different 'intertexts' brought to the reading of the dance as 'text'. In this context what is embodied becomes open to the interpretation of the spectator, consideration of which, in the previous discussion of intertextuality, led to the following questions:

Which texts are focussed on and why?

If what is perceived to be embodied in the dance is one 'text' alongside others, is it simply a matter of preference how much consideration is given to such 'texts'?

In order to explore these questions further it is important to consider what may be perceived to be embodied in a dance from a sociological and anthropological perspective. To this end it is necessary to consider how the physical grounding of human experience has been theorised in these disciplines.

3.2 'Embodiment' in Sociology and Anthropology

The corporeal nature of human existence became a popular topic for sociologists towards the last quarter of the twentieth century. According to the sociologist Bryan Turner, an earlier more abstract approach to people as 'social agents' may be in part due to 'the spectre of social Darwinism, biological reductionism or socio-biology' (Turner, 1984, 1) which made it initially difficult for sociologists in general to embrace specific interests in the body. Turner also points out that early sociologists were 'concerned with the similarities between industrial capitalist societies rather than the differences between human beings over long evolutionary periods' (Turner, 1991, 6). However, for Helen Thomas, a sociologist with a specific interest in dance, the body is implicated in earlier sociological texts (Thomas, 2003, 14) and this, in combination with anthropological interest in the body, suggests to her that the body 'has not been quite as absent as is sometimes supposed' (Thomas, 2003, 32). In both accounts, early sociological interest in the specific bodily aspects of being human is revealed to be largely the province of those with an anthropological interest.

As the anthropologist and pop culturalist Ted Polhemus observed in the late 1970s, the diverse sociological, semiotic, linguistic and phenomenological approaches found in different anthropological studies of the body made, and still make, it difficult to contemplate a 'unified anthropology of the body' (Polhemus, 1978, 27). It is not simply the problem of understanding the different approaches, but rather that in each may be found conflicting attitudes to ontological questions in relation to the nature of body, mind, meaning, self, society and the relationships between them.

Within the field of sociology, a particularly significant conflict in terms of theory, which has implications for the understanding of 'embodiment', is the

relationship between social structures and individual agency. In both functionalism and structuralism emphasis is placed on systems and structures which tend to constrain individuals who are viewed as fitting into prescribed roles. In contrast humanist and hermeneutic approaches to the social world emphasise the significance of individual actions unfettered by the constraints of structure. Thus what is embodied may be viewed as predominantly either the product of social forces or the result of an individual's actions. However, in the structuration theory of Anthony Giddens (as cited in Cassell, 1993, 88-96) and in Bourdieu's theory of habitus and field (discussed below) can be seen attempts to provide theoretically for an understanding of human agency as dialectically related to society. For Giddens, as cited in Cassell (1993, 89), the study of society focuses on 'neither the experience of the individual actor, nor the existence of any form of societal totality but social practices ordered across space and time'. Such practices are 'recursive' in that while they are not brought into being by 'social actors' they are continually recreated by them. Structuration theory may allow for a level of human agency in which norms, while not deterministic, may be embodied. However, it may be felt that the discussion of abstract 'social actors' still seems to rely on a less than fully fleshed out view of human agency (Schilling, 1996). Pierre Bourdieu's theory of the 'habitus' is more closely related to bodily experience through what he describes as the 'bodily hexis' and it is this theory that will be explored more thoroughly in an account of embodiment in later twentieth century sociology.

Since sometimes a writer's stance in relation to such matters is open to debate (as will be seen in relation to the discussion of Erving Goffman), very different readings of key texts on the body in relation to society may be found resulting in the same work being interpreted as supporting contrasting

positions. This makes for some difficulties in presenting an outline of different arguments, since how they are placed in relation to current theoretical positions may be open to dispute. In some cases it is not even clear whether texts should be classed as anthropological or sociological. For this reason the texts are discussed, initially, in a more or less historic order: a summary of key writings on the body or embodiment dating from the early to mid twentieth century will be followed by a more detailed discussion of two texts that have had a far ranging influence on later twentieth century interest in this area.

3.3 Early and Mid Twentieth Century Anthropological and Sociological Approaches to the Body/Embodiment

Marcel Mauss, a student of the sociologist Emile Durkheim, writing in the first half of the twentieth century, first identified 'body techniques' as 'the ways in which from society to society men know how to use their bodies' (Mauss, 1979 [1935], 97). For Mauss the body was a 'technical object, and at the same time a technical means' (Mauss, 1979 [1935], 104), the 'habits' of which were not just a matter of variations between individuals but 'between societies, educations, proprieties and fashions, prestiges' (Mauss, 1979 [1935], 101). While this might well be viewed today as a valid theoretical approach to the body in society, the manner in which Mauss distinguished between 'so-called primitive societies' that 'display more brutal, unreflected, unconscious reactions' (Mauss, 1979 [1935], 122) and those in which conscious action dominates over emotion and the unconscious, leaves him open to accusations of ethnocentrism. However his 'triple viewpoint' of the 'total man' (Mauss, 1979 [1935], 101), the actions of whom are only clearly understood in terms that are psychological, physiological and sociological, are important to later anthropological accounts of embodiment (Polhemus,

1978, 21). Moreover Mauss introduced the concept of the 'habitus' (Mauss, 1979 [1935], 101), or 'acquired ability' that has had a significant influence on later developments in sociology including the work of Pierre Bourdieu, whose concepts of 'habitus' and 'social fields' are discussed below.

Norbert Elias, a sociologist writing in the late 1930s, equated self control with a process of civilisation. Elias offers a rich account of how, as modern Europe emerged out of the medieval period, people became increasingly distanced from their bodily functions. Through accounts of the use of eating utensils, nightwear, and private toilets, Elias relates this process of distancing to the acquisition of self control. The impact of this distancing is not limited to creating physical boundaries: quoting La Salle (1774) on how children must be taught 'to touch all they see only with their eyes' Elias suggests the further implications of this in relation to 'civilised man' who

...is denied by socially instilled self control from spontaneously touching what he desires, loves or hates. The whole moulding of his gestures - no matter how its pattern may differ among western nations with regard to particulars – is decisively influenced by this necessity.

Elias, 1978 [1939], 203

Whilst Elias seems to have had a generally positive view of the civilising process, he does emphasise the relationship between social structure and personality that, it could be argued, prefigures some of the more pessimistic findings of Michel Foucault that will be discussed later. Although others, such as the cultural historian Keith Thomas, have developed his themes to show a rather less linear development of the civilising process (Thomas, 1991, 11), Elias' premise that psychological norms are intrinsically related to social dynamics is still influential. In relation to (western) theatre dance, the concept

of bodily actions being moulded by the social processes that instil self control, together with recognition of the dominance of visual over more physical ways of exploring the world, provide an interesting perspective on ballet. 'The primacy of sight' that 'saturates' the practices, theatrical context and audience perspectives of ballet has been recently discussed in detail by the sociologist Helen Thomas (2003) drawing on the work of dance anthropologist Cynthia Novack¹ (1997). The concept of distancing has also been explored by Pierre Bourdieu (1979) and, as will be explored further, has implications in relation to the aesthetic value placed on the formal properties of (western) theatre dance.

Erving Goffman, writing in the late 1950s, highlighted the non verbal, behavioural aspects of social interactions and the element of performance involved in self presentation: individuals in institutional settings are confronted with expectations of a given 'social front' to a point at which fulfilling the expectations of performing their perceived role may conflict with the actions necessary to complete relevant tasks. Goffman (1969[1956]) brought into focus not only the social context of behaviour but the expertise with which people learn to read behaviour and attempt to adapt their own, in front of others, to give the right impression. It is open to debate whether Goffman was, as Schilling (1993) suggests, presenting behaviour as socially constructed and revealing of a dualistic approach to body:mind. Alternatively, as Thomas (2003) argues, Goffman can be read as revealing an understanding of the intercorporeal relationships informing social action. In either interpretation, Goffman reveals the extent to which, in an everyday context, skills are developed to read and question behaviour. Unless a purely formalist aesthetic is adhered to, such skills can be understood to inform the perception of dance. For instance, residual awareness of whether actions

'ring false' in day to day interactions may inform the judgements that are made about expression and characterisation as appearing 'truthful' in dance. It is interesting to note that during the same period that Goffman was considering performance as an every day activity, dance artists presenting work at Judson Church in New York were exploring every day actions in a performance context, in so doing questioning traditional dance aesthetics and, albeit from a very different perspective to Goffman, opening up a debate about the significance of everyday movement.

Mary Douglas, writing at the very end of the 1960s, attempted to unify different anthropological approaches in her discussion of 'natural systems of symbolizing' that use the body as a readily available medium of expression (Douglas, 1973 [1970]). Drawing on a structuralist approach to the formulation of symbolic systems, Douglas distinguishes between cross cultural variations in body symbolism and the potential for correlations in the relationships between 'the character of the symbolic system and that of the social system' that she argues are a feature of a wide range of human societies (1973 [1970], 12). Although Douglas herself recognised the theoretical difficulties of her approach (1973 [1970], 8), her willingness to relate individual phenomenological experience to a structuralist formulation of a symbolic system makes for findings that have implications for understanding the body (and thus the dancing body) in the social context:

According to the rule of distance from physiological origin (or the purity rule) the more the social situation exerts pressure on persons involved in it, the more the social demand for conformity tends to be expressed by a demand for physical control. Bodily processes are more ignored and more firmly set outside the social discourse, the more the latter is important.

Douglas, 1973 [1970], 12

Douglas contemplates the structural relationship between the demands for bodily control and social pressures exerted on those belonging to a cultural group. In a quite complex analysis of relationships between individuals and how different societies articulate social rules (group) and the levels of pressure exerted on individuals by society (grid), Douglas pursues her hypothesis 'that bodily control is an expression of social control' (1973 [1970], 99). She finds that in different kinds of society in relation to 'grid' and 'group', 'the image of the body is used in different ways to reflect and enhance each person's experience of society' (1973 [1970]), 16). Bodily preoccupations and the accompanying metaphors for how society is viewed will vary according to differences in the aspects of 'grid' and 'group'. For Douglas, prevailing body images reveal 'unspoken' shared assumptions that underlie and set limits for discourse. If dance is considered as drawing on these images it follows that the dancing body may be viewed as a metaphor for a social view that, while shared, may not always be articulated at a fully conscious level since it draws on those assumptions that are most deeply ingrained. Here, as in the work of Norbert Elias, issues in relation to bodily control in dance can be seen as significant in relation to the conceptual frameworks informing society.

Whilst the work of those cited above pointed to different aspects of the relationships between psychology, physiology, and society, a number of American anthropologists studied the body in relation to communication, using models adapted from linguistics and communication. For instance, Ray Birdwhistell's kinesics (1971) offers tools for the analysis of movement looking at how individual action, or 'kines', are combined and structured, while Edward Hall's 'proxemics' (1959) analyses differences in spatial

structuring. Helen Thomas suggests that their theories have perhaps not been more generally adopted due to their being predicated on academic traditions (American structural linguistics, communication theory and behaviourism) that came in for criticism for their positivist bias (Thomas, 2003, 25). However, by studying the cultural differences in both body actions and their interpretation, their works did much to question assumptions about 'body language' being universally communicative. This made it more difficult to sustain a point of view in which dance is universally expressive except where the aesthetic realm is viewed as in some way transcending more everyday channels of communication.

For other anthropologists, the focus seems to have remained on the interplay of the social and physical. Certainly this was the subject of a conference of anthropologists in the late 1970s. In the preface to the collection of conference papers John Blacking sums up one of the conference's aims as being 'to break down the dichotomies of body and mind, emotion and reason, nonverbal and verbal, in our analyses of social and cultural organization' (Blacking, 1977, viii). Blacking, in his paper, considers human society as a biological phenomenon (Blacking, 1977, 8) and is careful to emphasise the role of human adaptation in relation to social and environmental factors that impact on human evolution. Arguing from what seems to be a largely phenomenological perspective that draws on Merleau-Ponty, Blacking argues for somatic, cognitive and unconscious capacities that are specific to humans as a species but are affected by factors of social and cultural environment. He posits the possibility of 'shared somatic states' (Blacking, 1977, 9) although recognising that society or culture may be limiting factors. The human potential to 'transform commonly experienced internal sensations into externally visible and transmissible forms' seems to offer the possibility of

universal communication that is limited by social and cultural differences, and in particular by aspects of culture 'in which excessive importance is attached to verbal communication' (Blacking, 1977, 10).

In Blacking's description of potential as becoming atrophied if not given the 'appropriate social and cultural environment' (Blacking, 1977, 10-11) may be sensed an underlying utopian vision of a world in which the communication between all humans is developed by virtue of their potential being realised through appropriate opportunities. A visionary element to Blacking's paper is further revealed in his references to human capacity for telepathy that for some may make his position difficult to agree with. Yet as the dance anthropologist Andrée Grau (1999) suggests, ignoring phenomena because they appear 'irrational' is to avoid offering a fully adequate or 'truthful' account. However this does not mean to say that whatever explanation of the phenomena is given by those experiencing it has to be accepted at face value. Blacking's account of the potential to share some aspects of somatic experience through visible bodily activity provides a basis for non verbal communication that is grounded in the phenomenological experience of embodiment. Further, as Grau discusses, Blacking opens up the possibility of non verbal communication such as dance transcending some cultural boundaries without claiming that it is a 'universal language' (Grau, 1993,25). In this context Blacking's (1977) inclusion of the work of the psychologist, Paul Ekman is interesting. The latter's discussion of research into facial expression points to a complex 'interplay of biological and social factors' that seems to suggest that some spontaneous facial expression is shared cross culturally, but is subject to social adaptation that can subsume the more spontaneous responses.

Also writing in the late 1970s, Ted Polhemus suggested updating Mauss' 'triple framework' to develop a means of understanding human embodiment that brings together the physical with the psychological and sociological. However, he recognises that an approach drawing on different disciplines is fraught with problems of definition and conflicts between different theoretical frameworks. Nevertheless he suggests a consideration of 'sign systems' that explores both verbal and non verbal communication in relation to questions of their relationship to social context. This would include examining whether sign systems are 'rooted in and generated by certain social situations' (Polhemus, 1970, 152) and whether types of social situation generate different modes of signification, for instance arbitrary or non arbitrary. In this way, Polhemus argues, the social underpinnings of both language and art might be explored. Polhemus also brings to attention the findings of psychologists about cross cultural variations in body imagery that may relate to the findings of anthropologists in relation to cross cultural variations in bodily expression.

From the above it can be seen that prior to the last quarter of the twentieth century, questions about the significance of the body and its relationship to society and social interaction had been explored from a combination of anthropological, sociological and psychological viewpoints. During the 1970s, discussion of the various interrelationships between body:mind:society suggested in earlier writings, often reveal the influence of the discourse of structuralism. The influence of linguistic models of structuralism focussed attention on the structural relationships between the components of action, while anthropological interest emphasised the structures of the relationship between action and societies. As data revealing the cultural differences in what Mauss had termed 'body techniques' was collected, this data could be presented so as to demonstrate structural universals such as the relationship

between social pressure and physical self control (Douglas, 1973 [1970], chapter 7).

3.4 Power and Distinction: Perspectives from the works of Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu

The 1970s also saw publications by two key French academics that further contributed to interest in the subject of the body and embodiment within a range of academic studies in the latter part of the twentieth century. The sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and the category defying Michel Foucaultⁱⁱ, both contributed to an exploration of the body as implicated in the play of powers that form social relations. Discussions of their approaches to the body are often found in contemporary accounts of the body and in much recent writing on dance. These latter are often presented as poststructuralist in the sense that they ‘deconstruct’ established practices and perceptions of dance. This is not to say either Bourdieu or Foucault would necessarily have wanted to be, or can be identified as part of this movement. The latter’s approach, for instance has been criticised as structuralist (Turner, 1996 [1984], 231).

In the seminal Discipline and Punish (1979) [published in French as Naissance de La Prison, 1975] Michel Foucault charts changes in power relations exemplified in relation to French history spanning from the period of Medieval autocracy to modern democracy. His account is revealing of how the body is implicated in these changes:

The body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs.

Foucault, 91 [75], 25

Foucault contrasts different approaches to the exertion of power. For instance the public, medieval events of torture and execution displayed the power invested in the King over his subjects. These are illustrated by first hand written accounts that, for the contemporary reader, reveal the extreme levels of physical violence to which the 'body of the condemned' was subjected. As the Medieval gave way to the beginnings of Modernity, the rationalisation of time and space are shown to be important techniques of control. Surveillance as a technique of control in the modern age is revealed through Foucault's oft cited exploration of the concept of the panoptican prison. From Foucault too comes the understanding of the ever watchful eye controlling behaviour as becoming increasingly internalised. This brings an increase in pressure on members of contemporary western societies to conform to acceptable norms of behaviour.

In the examination of the relationship between physical and social control there are striking similarities here with the work of both Mary Douglas and Norbert Elias. However, both Elias and Douglas framed their arguments from the standpoint of those who believed insightful analysis could improve the lot of those living in twentieth century western societies. Douglas, for instance, retains a sense of the potential for individuals to 'preserve their vision' by becoming aware of the lure of 'natural systems of symbols' (Douglas, 1973 [1970], 200).

In contrast Foucault, in emphasising the extent of the reach of the techniques of power in contemporary society, is far less optimistic:

It is this whole technology of power over the body that the technology of the 'soul' – that of the educationalists, psychologists and psychiatrists – fails either to conceal

or compensate, for the simple reason that it is one of its tools.

Foucault, 30, 1997 [1975]

It is perhaps the focus on the inescapable nature of power that impacts on the body through self monitoring that has led to Foucault being viewed as implicitly continuing a dualist approach to mind:body:

Once the body is contained within modern disciplinary systems, it is the mind which takes over as the location for discursive power.

Schilling, 1993, 80

Foucault's arguments are complex and, especially when having to read him in translation, I am wary of categorizing his argument so precisely. While, as Schilling points out, Foucault's analysis can be used to sustain a sense of a body that becomes the object of discourse, his text, in its virtuosic display of 'mental' gymnastics, can seem itself (at least in English translation) to be 'somewhat disembodied' (Schilling, 1993, 80). However, reading this work from a dancer's perspective can bring to the surface a more phenomenological awareness of embodiment. Using examples from approaches to schooling and military training, Foucault reveals how the body in time and space became subjected to increasingly strict controls and precise regulations. His examples resonated very physically for me as they awakened memories of how I felt whilst training to be a ballet dancer. For me they recalled the legacy of rationalism experienced daily at the barre as I struggled to make geometrically clear actions to precise counts.

How classical ballet is located within the context of the Western European cultural traditions that Foucault examines has been well documented (Kealiinohomoku, 1983 [1970]; Briginshaw, 2001, 199; Helen Thomas, 2003, 95-102). Bringing such physical resonances to a reading of Foucault is admittedly, a rather idiosyncratic approach to his text. However, according to Forrest Williams (1993), who translated much of Foucault's work into English, in his early work there is evidence of the influence of Husserl and Heidegger that locates Foucault as emerging from a phenomenological tradition whilst

recognising what, for him, were the limitations of that movement. For Williams, the early Foucault saw phenomenology as 'indispensable for recapturing the expressive character of intentionality' and 'for understanding the existential significance of dreams and images', but as 'insufficient to capture the reality of others' (Williams, 1993 [1985], 26). Thus bringing phenomenological experience of embodiment to a reading of Foucault may not be inappropriate, although with the author coming from a culture accustomed to military service and writing specifically about military training, it would be more appropriate to bring this experience to the text.

In Discipline and Punish there is at least one passage where Foucault himself draws attention to the interplay between discourse and physical experience. Quoting from an early account of military training, Foucault reveals how, becoming aware of the shortcomings of an excessively mechanistic approach to disciplining the body, military theorists in the eighteenth century recognised the importance of understanding the workings of the 'natural body':

If we studied the intention of nature and the construction of the human body, we would find the position and the bearing that nature clearly prescribes for the soldier.

Guibert, 1772 in Foucault, 977[1975], 155

Dance scholars may find parallels here between Guibert's complaints about 'unfortunate soldiers in constricting and forced attitudes' and the grumbles of his near contemporary, the ballet master and choreographer Jean-Georges Noverre, against over complicated steps and cumbersome costumes. In his *Lettres* of 1760, Noverre entreated students of dance 'to cease to resemble marionettes' and to 'gracefully set aside the narrow laws of a school to follow the impressions of nature' (Noverre, 1966 [1760], 99-108).

From a dance perspective this can be understood as an indication of attitudes to the body in dance reflecting the broader culture. For Foucault, the reference to Guibert is not only to provide evidence of a cultural shift of interest from the body as mechanical object to the body as natural object, but reveals the body as the site of the interplay between power and the individual:

The body required to be docile in its minutest operations, opposes and shows the conditions of functioning proper to an organism. Disciplinary power has as its correlative an individuality that is not only analytical and 'cellular', but also natural and organic.

Foucault, 1977 [1975], 156

It would be wrong to say that the soul is an illusion, or an ideological effect. On the contrary, it exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, within the body by the functioning of a power that is exercised on those punished - and, in a more general way, on those one supervises, trains and corrects...

This real non corporeal soul is not a substance; it is the element in which are articulated the effects of a certain type of power and the reference of a certain type of knowledge, the machinery by which the power relations give rise to a possible corpus of knowledge.

Foucault, 1977 [1975], 29

Terence Turnerⁱⁱⁱ, drawing on the work of Bryan Turner, and writing about the whole canon of Foucault's work, suggests that viewing the body as created by power yet endowed with a capability to resist power, leads Foucault to a self contradictory position. If, as according to Terence Turner, Foucault's project was to offer an alternative to 'the individualism and transcendental subjectivism of bourgeois liberal and classical (Cartesian, Kantian) approaches', Terence Turner argues that Foucault's arguments return him to a similar philosophical position:

“Resistance” is thus explained as a sort of natural (i.e. pre social and apolitical) emanation of the body, as “power” is conceived as a natural (trans-historical and trans-cultural) emanation of society. Neither has a definable political purpose or specific social or institutional source. In being thus depoliticized and desocialised, Foucault’s resistance thus ironically becomes, in effect, a category of transcendental subjectivity situated in the body.

Terence Turner in Csordas, 1994, 36

In his analyses of the body, I am unsure whether Foucault reveals his own philosophical dualism and/or a lingering bourgeois individualism or reflects how these are interwoven in the relationship between knowledge and power in contemporary western societies. From my own perspective the latter is what I understood in a reading that was situated in my own experience. Foucault offers fascinating insights into how the conscious structuring of the body in time and space and the struggle for self control (that as a dancer I recognise only too well) has as its correlate, in modern western society, the desire to experience the ‘natural’ body as a means of individual expression. This dialectic, appears to me as that age old conflict between technique and expression, which may itself be viewed as being embodied in western dance practices and, as I discussed previously, is interwoven with a dualist approach to body:mind. This tension is illustrated by discussion of the training of dancers in (western) theatre dance from the eighteenth century to the present day:

He should divide his attention between the mechanism of the steps and the movements proper to express the passions...

Noverre, 1966 [1760], 106

Another consequence of dualism is that it encourages the all too common view that the training of a dancer is the training of the body, simply as physical. The body then is viewed mechanistically, as a thing to be honed, and moulded into shape.

Horton-Fraleigh, 1987, 11

Foucault's discussion of the body and power are more often cited in relation to the idea that the body is shaped by discourse, and in this way is 'inscribed' by forms of knowledge saturated by power relations. For instance, the historian of dance and the arts, Ramsay Burt, discusses the problems of conceiving of the body as 'formed within discourse' in relation to 'the extent to which individuals and groups of men are inhibited by the dominant gender ideologies in the process of constructing and realizing their identities' (Burt, 1995, 45-48). In the context of dance appreciation this then brings the discourses that might shape both the body and perceptions of the body into the interpretative arena. What is problematic in relation to understanding dance, is that all too easily the phenomenological experience of physical presence may be lost if too heavy a focus is placed on what is 'written on the body'. From a sociological viewpoint there are parallel concerns:

Foucault's body has no flesh; it is begotten out of discourse by power...

Terence Turner in Csordas, 1994,

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Such problems have not deterred a fascination with discourse amongst dance theorists: a whole conference at The University of Surrey in 1995 entitled Border Tensions: Dance and Discourse brought together a number of speakers who drew on various discourses such as those of feminism, post modernism, psychoanalysis and semiotics to both illuminate aspects of dance and, to some extent, (see particularly Thomas, 1996, 305-321) to

question the significance of such discourses in the emergent field of dance studies. As Janet Adshead stated in her opening paper, in contrast with the focus of other academic disciplines in the late twentieth century dance theory was concerned not to ignore the 'actualities and physicalities' of dancing (Adshead, 1995, 1). Looking through the different papers it is not completely clear how these are to be understood in relation to discourse. For instance how/how much is the body inscribed by discourse? Adshead herself seems to suggest the body is 'written on', a 'site' that is 'culturally inscribed' (Adshead, 1995, 1). Alexandra Carter's paper gives the impression that the meaning of the body in dance is acquired through a variety of mutually reinforcing discourses which include the kinetic alongside the more traditional written, aural and visual (Carter, 1995, 67-76), whereas Andrée Grau, while recognising that 'the body is shaped and perceived through discourse', does not view the body as 'reducible solely to discourse' (Grau, 1995, 141). Elsewhere this 'reductive' view is discussed by Bryan Turner in his examination of the perspective by which 'the body is constructed by discourse and our knowledge of it is only made possible by classificatory procedures' (Turner, 1996, 229). Turner identifies this as a structuralist perspective in which the body 'is not part of a given reality, but an effect of our systemization of becoming' (Turner, 1996, 229). For him, such a perspective is problematic in that 'human conscious action is reduced to the effects of discourse' which 'ignores the phenomenology of embodiment' and leaves 'no theoretical space for human resistance to discourse since we are determined by what we are permitted to know' (Turner, 1996, 229). In relation to the potential for individual agency in the creative acts of both making and appreciating dance, what needs to be clarified is the relationship between discourse and the phenomenological experience of the body in the context of dance.

Before discussing this further it may help to explore some issues raised by Pierre Bourdieu. In the influential Distinction (1984) [1979], Bourdieu offers an analysis of the values and tastes of different sections of French society. Pointing to the 'social fields' in which people develop their different cultural competencies, he analyses differences between the cultural preferences of different groups in relation to the economic struggle between social groups:

Because they are acquired in social fields which are also markets in which they receive their price, cultural competencies are dependent on these markets, and all struggles over culture are aimed at creating the market most favourable to the products which are marked, in their manners, by a particular class of conditions of acquisition...

Bourdieu, 1979, 95

Aware from his sociological data of the correlation between class and the capacity to appreciate high culture he determines to 'bring to light the hidden conditions behind this "miracle"' (Bourdieu, 1979, 28). He is thus concerned with how the dominant groups maintain their 'mode of acquisition', particularly in relation to passing their cultural capital on to their descendents. Focussing on those methods that are least visible, Bourdieu develops the concept of 'habitus' as a 'disposition that generates meaningful practices and meaning giving perceptions' (Bourdieu, 1979, 70). The 'habitus' is revealed through 'differences in gesture and posture and behaviour which express a whole relationship to the social world' (Bourdieu, 1979, 192) and relates to different classificatory systems that are both structured and structuring of behaviour:

The principle of division into logical classes which organises the perception of the social world is itself the product of internalisation of the division into social classes.

Bourdieu argues that children are most easily inculcated into cultural practices by their parents and points to how success in an educational institution is reliant on the child's early induction into the relevant cultural practices, especially where they may not be explicitly taught. Thus perceptual and evaluative schemes are reproduced by the dominant class in relation to legitimate culture. Bourdieu's study identified the ability to categorise experiences and to maintain that sense of distance necessary for traditional forms of the aesthetic disposition as central attributes of the French elite. In his preface to the English language edition of Distinction, Bourdieu suggests the relevance of his findings to the wider context of western societies (Bourdieu, 1984, xi). For him, as for Mauss and Elias earlier, the process of distancing from instinctive reactions seems to be intertwined with the concept of (western) civilisation. Certainly, the notion of the aesthetic disposition as being one of a distinct form of perception that depends, to some degree, on the suspension of everyday reactions towards art objects lies at the heart of traditional formalist aesthetics discussed in chapter two. That such an aesthetic, or variations of it, may often be promoted as the preferred manner for the appreciation of much of the western classical heritage, and for the high modernist art of the twentieth century, lends support to the idea that it is tied in with the dispositions of the elite of western society who are most likely to demonstrate an interest in classical and high modernist art.

Since Bourdieu's research in France in the 1970s, changes in western society have led to a situation in which 'powerful institutions have connected the masses and the elites' leading to the erosion of the distinction between high and low culture' (Blau, 1983, 285). However, as will be considered in

more depth in chapter five, in relation to dance in Britain 'high cultural' forms such as classical ballet and the 'contemporary' dance that draws on a modernist legacy, still tend to dominate in terms of Arts Council support, programming in prestigious venues and academic and critical interest.

Competence in relation to appreciating the arts, according to Bourdieu, is 'an unconscious mastery of the instruments of appropriation'. It is 'a practical mastery which, like an art of thinking or an art of living, cannot be transmitted solely by precept or prescription' (Bourdieu, 1979, 66). The habitus and the dispositions to perceptual schemes it engenders may not always be readily available for description. Bourdieu's interest in how the transmission of cultural capital may be hidden leads him to illustrate the difficulties in taking on the habitus of a social group someone is not born into, in part because the values and attitudes that are embodied are not always made explicit. In this light, different aesthetic approaches may be seen as related to competing interests of different groups that may not be openly acknowledged. This raises the possibility that the manner in which the dancing body is approached could be politically saturated without this being apparent to audience or artist.

While accounting for why differences in bodily posture and movement may be perceived as embodying the values and attitudes of a specific social group, the concept of habitus supports the sense that just what is embodied is dependent on interactions within a social field and thus liable to change. In focussing on what forms the dispositions of individuals within a social field, Bourdieu brings to the fore the embodied experiences that form the person. The dancing body may be perceived as meaningful in relation to the habitus and as such both structured by and structuring of the social world in which it

is presented. Unless dance is thought to exist in its own hermetically sealed social or aesthetic field, it is difficult not to conclude that such meanings have resonance in relation to the wider cultural context. Such meanings emanating from the social field are subject to changes in that field and derived from the practices and perceptions found within a particular social field that may at times be nearly invisible to members of that social group.

Bringing a reading of Bourdieu into play in the interpretation of dance draws attention to how dance may be seen to embody cultural norms. In discussions of the past this may not reveal anything new or contentious: the significance of Louis XIV taking on the role of the 'Le Roi Soleil' is the stuff of first level dance history courses. Similarly, few would argue against the notion that hierarchic structures are embedded in the traditional form of ballet along with the legacy of the tension between rationalism and romanticism that is embodied in the technique as developed in the late nineteenth century. In relation to more recent history, Gay Morris specifically draws on Bourdieu's concept of habitus to suggest how the choreography of Martha Graham's Night Journey (1947) reveals the tensions in her position as an avant garde artist seeking financial stability through broader acceptance (Morris, 2001, 52). Yet it is Anne Daly's discussion of Balanchine ballerinas as 'co-constituting their own oppression,' (Daly, 2002 [1987], 286) that, as we saw in the previous chapter, seems to have drawn the fire of those rather less keen to emphasise a feminist viewpoint in relation to the 'masterworks' of America's famous choreographer. As discussed in chapter two, the antagonistic viewpoints of Daly and Copeland in respect to discussion of Balanchine's The Four Temperaments (1946) reveal the problems of any singular reading of a complex work. Yet perhaps they also reveal that when dance that is currently valued highly is the subject of such scrutiny,

challenges to the basis of its value are seen as a serious matter. Bourdieu's suggestion that debates over culture are rooted in the struggle for material benefit by one group in conflict with another may suggest a reason for such sensitivities. From the perspective of intertextuality, texts such as those of Bourdieu and Foucault may be drawn on to broaden interpretations of dance and certainly open up some interesting questions regarding significance. What needs to be considered is how much emphasis is placed on such texts and what the reasons are for this.

3.5 Implications for the Intertextual Interpretation of Dance

As the discussion of Anne Daly's interpretation of Balanchine's The Four Temperaments demonstrates, there can be a tendency in some contemporary accounts of dance to foreground texts that discuss how cultural dominance of a specific group is embodied. However, if one specific interpretation of a work is argued for too persistently, there is a danger of returning to essentialist aesthetics. This parallels the finding of Helen Thomas in her paper 'Do You Want to Join the Dance' (Thomas, 1996). Thomas, referring largely to the manner in which feminist discourses have impacted on dance theory, voices a concern in relation to Cooper Albright's 1990 discussion of the work of Molissa Fenley:

Cooper Albright's analysis ...implies a dance hierarchy: forms that reflexively disrupt the dominant canons of representation are politically more advanced.....

The problem with this view, however, is that it is somewhat at odds with the postmodernist/poststructuralist rhetoric that the paper seems to celebrate, in that it assumes it is through the relation of the creator/performer to the spectacle that the single reading the audience is allowed/enabled to see is fixed.

Thomas, 1996, 81

In interpreting dance within the intertextual framework proposed by Adshead (1999), it is important to reflect on why certain 'intertexts' are viewed as being of particular importance. Later chapters will consider aspects of how ethnicity, gender, class, age and ability are perceived as embodied in dance and the impact such perceptions may have on the value placed on dances. In any such discussion it is important to be wary of reducing dances to a singular reading by only focussing attention on how aspects of ethnicity, class or gender are embodied.

Drawing on a range of aesthetic traditions dating back to Kant, but strongly influenced by the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, the aesthetician Paul Crowther considers the potential of intertextuality, or 'plurality' to promote 'greater and more critical discussion' (Crowther, 1993, 199). In offering what he terms an 'ecological' definition of art he argues against reducing ascriptions of aesthetic value to 'group preferences' but suggests a multiplicity of viewpoints are drawn on in rational, critical debate in order to 'establish whether some highly regarded work might owe its privileged status more to the reflection and consolidation of power interests than to its own merits' (1993, 200). Crowther recognises that his view of consensus in aesthetics would function as an ideal rather than a practical possibility, but is anxious that the ideal serves to open up a space for critical debate of concepts such as artistic excellence and originality to counteract art being reduced to a play of powers between vested interests. Informed by readings of Bourdieu and Foucault it might be argued that the concepts of rational, critical debate, artistic excellence and originality are part of the framework that structures and is structured by the 'habitus' of an educated elite in western society and are thus part of this power play of vested interests. However, Crowther's ecological definition of art is based on the concept of

'ontological reciprocity' that for him 'is the very root condition of human being' (1993, 200). For Crowther the arts are able to 'enhance and reflect the interaction of factors necessary to self-consciousness at the level of perception itself' (1993, 187). Self consciousness is dependent on the fact of human 'ontological reciprocity' and thus on the relationship with 'otherness', in particular other people. Crowther tends to stray into a universalist approach to the function of art that is beyond the scope of this study. However, read within the context of art in western society it provides a case for the increasing multiplicity of aesthetic viewpoints as potentially illuminating. In this context the function of the artist may be rejuvenating while in contrast, for Bourdieu, the function of the artist in contemporary western society is 'eschatological' (Bourdieu, 1984 [1979], 317).

Contrasting the positions of Bourdieu with Crowther, as in the earlier comparison of the stance of Foucault to Douglas, reveals a common difference in the underlying attitudes to the question of agency and the relationship of the individual to society. Bourdieu was critical of structuralist sociology and developed his theory to allow for actions that were both structured by and structuring of society. Yet in both his and Foucault's work, the individual may seem to be caught up in the web of social relationships in which class and power, embodied in people's actions are interwoven into the fabric of society so as to seem inescapable. In contrast there seems to be a stronger humanist influence on Crowther and Douglas (although the latter's approach is structuralist) in whose writings embodied individuals seem to have the capacity to effect change by virtue of their coming to an understanding of the context of their embodied existence. By suggesting how the distribution of privilege and the control of the individual have become increasingly hidden rather than dissipated, Foucault and Bourdieu bring into

question assumptions about the historic progression of western civilisation to a society that is more equitable. In relation to Foucault's pessimism Bryan Turner suggests it arises from Foucault's lack of acknowledgement of 'the life affirming instinct' (Turner, 1996 [1984], 232). For Turner, in the recognition of the phenomenological experience of embodiment the potentiality of human agency is affirmed:

Embodiment is more than conceptual; it is also potentiality and the realization of that potency requires a social critique which recognizes that some societies are more free than others.

Turner, 1996 [1984], 232

Whether the optimistic or pessimistic point of view is taken, or even some combination, this debate raises awareness of the possibility that the choices of 'texts' that are emphasised in an intertextual approach to a dance may be loaded with political and ethical concerns.

Reflecting on the above re-emphasises the importance of the relationship between discourse and the phenomenological experience of the body in dance. Following Foucault, concepts of text and discourse have been extended by dance theorists well beyond speech and writing so that dance vocabularies and choreographic works are considered as texts and choreographic practices and structures as discourse. If dance practices are understood and appreciated with reference to the tacitly understood conventions that underpin the 'habitus', it suggests that there may be aspects of the phenomenological experience of dance which it may be difficult to reflect upon through language yet which may be important to appreciation. What is consciously recognised as the habitus informing the movement in a dance can become a text which may either be emphasised or ignored in relation to interpretation. However, there is always the possibility, particularly

in relation to the individual's experience of their own culture, that they are blind to the norms that inform the habitus and thus to the significance of those norms embodied in dance.

Rather than trying to fit the notion of habitus into semiotics, it might be simpler to allow for a dialogue between the phenomenological experience of dance and the reflective processes involved in intertextual interpretation. This might be one way in which reflection on the phenomenological experience of embodiment can enhance that interpretation. Within the context of academic disciplines which have separated the study of semiotics and phenomenology this may seem strange. However, as I have already touched on above, beyond dance there is a recognition that the social theory of the body is often 'narrowly focussed on the representational and cultural dimensions of the body' (Turner, 2000 [1996], 492). While Bryan Turner recognises that too little attention is paid to the phenomenological experience of the body, in outlining the requirements of the sociology of the body he is careful to point out that purely phenomenological approaches to embodiment often fail to recognize how individual experiences of embodiment are culturally mediated (Turner, 1996, [1984], 230). Thus he emphasises the issue of social reciprocity alongside phenomenological experience (Turner, 2000 [1996], 487). Within the discipline of dance studies there is already a tendency for writers to draw on a range of theoretical approaches to explore how dance is appreciated. For instance Merleau-Ponty features alongside Foucault and Lacan in Valerie Briginshaw's (2001) account of the relations between bodies and space in dance, while Preston-Dunlop's (1998) choreological approach to dance draws on a range of both phenomenological and semiotic approaches. Further, as was discussed briefly in the previous chapter (and will be further pursued in

the next), dance artists seem to explore their experience of a dance in relation to reflections on how it is perceived.

It has been suggested by the cultural and psychological anthropologist, Thomas Csordas, that an understanding of embodiment may necessitate investigation of the relationships between a number of perceived dualities. These are listed by him as being pre-objective:objectified, mind:body, representation:being in the world, semiotics:phenomenology, language:experience and textuality:embodiment:

These pairs of terms define a critical moment in theorizing about culture and self.....our purpose is to identify the terrain on which opposed terms meet, whether they are understood to remain in tension or to collapse upon one another. That terrain is marked by the characteristic reflectiveness and the process of objectification that define human consciousness, giving substance to representation and specificity to being-in-the-world.

Csordas, 1994, 20

The exploration of much of this terrain leads to a contemplation of the workings of the subconscious that is outside the province of this study. The contemplation of embodiment would be much easier if it were certain that all experiences of the world were always and completely saturated by the structures of discourse, or conversely, that humans are capable of pre-reflective experience not coloured by the symbolic systems of the culture into which they are born. Yet anthropology suggests a more complex interrelationship of nature:culture. Just how, and to what extent, the human biological organism is implicated in culture seems still ultimately shrouded in the mysteries of consciousness. Rather than resort to hiding behind these mysteries, insights from a number of different disciplines can lead to interrogation of the assumptions that may colour judgements and interpretations and consideration of the complexities of phenomenological experience.

3.6 The Significance of the Kinaesthetic

It may be useful at this point to consider the role of the imagination and the importance of the kinaesthetic sense in the appreciation of movement, particularly that which is new to the audience. In terms of appreciation of a dance after the event, there would be an expectation that some reasons could be given for what was enjoyed and understood. Unless traditional essentialist aesthetics is rigidly enforced, it would be recognised that

differences between members of the audience might lead to variations in what is enjoyed and understood as significant. Drawing on a consideration of the 'habitus' it might also be considered that, perhaps at a subconscious level, cultural norms are recognised to be embodied, or even repudiated, in the dance. Yet reflecting on the phenomenological experience of the dance may bring to light a sense of empathy or connection with a performer that is difficult to explain in the above terms. By imaginatively engaging with dance the audience can empathise with a way of being different to their own that is difficult to put into words. The kinaesthetic sense, by which physical sensations are associated with movements that are viewed, may facilitate a response to different ways of structuring bodily experience and the world views that inform them. It is possible that imaginative 'in the moment' involvement in a dance draws on visual, aural and proprioceptive experiences that have not always been consciously labelled.

Kinaesthetic responses to dance are not restricted to those who have practical experience of the dance form they watch, although it is likely that whether or not a spectator has the experience of actually having performed a grand jeté leads to a different order of kinaesthetic response when watching Baryshnikov leap. To have some kind of kinaesthetic response to movement seems likely to depend on having a memory, whether proprioceptive or visual, of some related movement with the imagination drawing on this and filling in for specific experience. In relation to leaps or jetés, with or without dance training the audience is likely to attach a name to the experience, but this may not always be the case in responses to subtler movements or differences in postural organisation. Where a dance and/or movement culture is very different to the audience members' own they may feel unable to appreciate it. Yet there are other instances when it seems possible to

appreciate some aspects of dance that are recognised as 'different'. For instance the dance anthropologist Andrée Grau points to the widespread enjoyment of Flamenco and African Dance as examples of what may be experienced as cross cultural 'understanding' of dance, while also pointing to the Tiwi's negative response to Balinese dance due, she suggests, to their vocabulary being 'too alien' (Grau 1993, 24). A sense of 'understanding' is not necessarily dependent on the audience member being able to consciously label movements but can be a response to actions that at a subconscious level are recognised as having some relationship to previous experience of movement. That the imagination, by drawing on experience helps to make sense of a different way of being, as it were filling in the blanks, is a rather more prosaic explanation than 'communing' or telepathy. Yet such an explanation might provide for that sense of communication that is of great importance to dancers. It is also one that does not necessarily mean that the spectators have insight into the unique and specific significance of the dance, the culture from which it originates, or what the dancer or choreographer felt they were expressing, but they may feel as if they have achieved some understanding. In the phenomenological experience of dance in performance the potentiality for communication may be fully enjoyed even if what is understood is partial.

3.7 Embodiment, Intertextuality and the Role of the Imagination in Appreciation

That consciously and unconsciously people may incorporate ways of being that structure and are structured by their participation in social processes, focuses attention on the significance of the movement range, spatial and dynamic patterning and postural subtleties of dance. In relation to forms of (western) theatre dance, in the very act of dancing on European stages today, dancers may be perceived as negotiating the legacy of rationalism, the power of social controls over individuals or their relationship to cultural groups. Only by disregarding the various discourses of sociology, anthropology, poststructuralism and phenomenology to maintain an essentialist and formalist aesthetic approach to dance can the connections be ignored between the experience of bodily movement and posture in everyday social contexts and the appreciation of dancing bodies. The anthropologist Clifford Geertz writing about the arts in relation to different cultures draws attention to the manner in which a way of being in the world infuses all aspects of a culture:

For Matisse, as is no surprise, is right: the means of an art and the feeling for life that animates it are inseparable, and one can no more understand aesthetic objects as concatenations of pure form than one can understand speech as a parade of syntactic variations or myth as a set of structural transformations.

Geertz, 1976, 1477

There is the danger of an inherent essentialism in drawing on sociological and anthropological discourses to interpret a dance as the sum of what can be named as being embodied by the dancers. In the reflection on dance, after the event, various 'texts' may be drawn on to illuminate interpretations

and to inform value judgements made about a dance. In such an intertextual analysis, sociological or anthropological texts may be drawn on to suggest reasons why a dance appears to represent one group of people in a particular way. Illuminating as such reflections can be, there is a danger that in such an analysis the focus becomes too narrowly set on discourse as inscribed on the body. Discussions of different readings of a dance become reduced to choices between discourses and as such are often too easily politicised in terms that, it could be argued, do not do justice to the full creative vision of a choreographer.

To return to the differences between Anne Daly's and Roger Copeland's accounts of Balanchine's The Four Temperaments, as has been observed by Jordan and Thomas (1998, 244), focussing on the manner in which the male dominates the female would seem to be a recipe for losing sight of the poetic richness of the work. The strength and skill of all the dancers and the ingenious choreographic play with classical convention (arguably including the structuring of male:female relationships) are important elements of the work as a whole. Yet Copeland by preferring to focus on aspects of the work that abstract the human body relies heavily on the notion of the disinterested aesthetic stance proper to 'high' art. It has been seen how Bourdieu equates such a stance with the habitus of the privileged classes in western society and how Norbert Elias views the process of distancing as a part of the process of civilisation, arguably within a western context. Perhaps what is most interesting about Copeland's approach is that it reveals the extent to which, in the 'high' culture of western civilisation, through the cultivation of aesthetic enjoyment, perception of dance can be experienced as distanced from everyday preoccupations. Given the historic changes in gender relationships and attitudes to sexuality in twentieth century America (which

will be further explored in chapter six), the ability of audiences to set such issues at a distance is a quite remarkable cultural feat. It should be noted, however, that a full account of The Four Temperaments was not what either writer intended. Anne Daly later admitted to a more complex appreciation of Balanchine (Daly, 2002 [2000], 336), and Copeland's focus is in arguing against reductive interpretations of art. Their readers can only wonder whether if they had both chosen to place more emphasis on their experience of watching this ballet they might find that Copeland and Daly, both being well educated Americans, knowledgeable about and interested in dance, shared more in their experience than their emphasis on specific aspects of the work suggests.

The appreciation of dance may be considered to draw on phenomenological experience interwoven with reflections on that experience. In this manner questions can be asked as to what preconceptions might be colouring both experience of the dance and accounts arising from it. Drawing on anthropological and sociological texts may lead to the contemplation of the role of intuition in recognising movement that either fits or counteracts the norms of a social group to which the audience member 'belongs'. This raises the question of how audiences seem to respond 'in the moment' to a dance that emanates from a different culture to their own. By engaging imaginatively with the dance phenomenon, insights may be gained into another 'way of being'. Imaginative engagement with dance that draws on all the senses, including the kinaesthetic, is an important aspect of the audience's phenomenological experience of dance. Such engagement can contribute to understanding and, in turn, this understanding may inform appreciation. Care needs to be taken to recognise the (inter)subjectivity of this experience and, in relation to appreciation of dance as art, to remember that aesthetic

enjoyment does not (and in Kantian terms should not) rely on the binding of understanding to a concept (even if from sociological or anthropological perspectives insights so gained may be useful). However, the potential of a dance to encourage this imaginative engagement does seem to be important to dance artists and it is something that will be explored further in relation to what dance artists have said about dance. Further, the possibility will also be considered that, in a context in which diversity is an issue of both local and global significance, the potential for such imaginative engagement with what might be viewed as 'other' becomes of increasing importance.

Notes to Chapter Three

ⁱ To whom Thomas refers by her later name, Cynthia Bull

ⁱⁱ Employed in university departments of philosophy, Foucault termed himself a 'genealogist' referring to his excavations of histories of discourse, while his analysis of discourse and episteme have influence across a whole range of academic fields.

ⁱⁱⁱ Since there are two different Turners writing on similar subjects Terrence Turner is identified by his full name to distinguish him from Bryan Turner.

4

Exploring ‘Embodiment’: Dance Artists’ Perspectives

4.0 Introduction

In the previous two chapters it has been suggested that in the moment of watching dance, the audience may understand what is embodied in relation to their immersion in a communicative matrix in which language and movement are intertwined. I have drawn on the work of philosophical aestheticians, critics, anthropologists and sociologists to consider how what is experienced as embodied may inform the audience’s understanding of dance. However, many of the dance writers, whose work I have drawn on in developing this study, were also informed by their practical experience of performing and/or creating dance. My own interest in the field stems as much from my role as practitioner as spectator and, as I have outlined in the introduction and chapter one, it is important to me to draw on the experiences of dance artists in exploring embodiment. The following discussion revisits some of the issues raised in chapters two and three drawing on the perspectives of artists concerned with creating and performing dance.

Descriptions of each artist interviewed for this study (Gaby Agis, Nina Anderson, Sushma Mehta and those identified anonymously as Artists A, B and D) and an account of the research process are detailed in chapter one. It is perhaps most important in relation to this discussion to emphasise that they all live and work in London and have experience of presenting work in the ‘non aligned’ (i.e. not for regularly funded dance companies) dance sector

in London. They have varying experience of performance outside London and some beyond Britain. Of the six artists interviewed initially, three work out of what could be loosely described as 'contemporary' dance traditions, one from the traditions of kathak, another from Egyptian dance and the sixth from a 'fusion' of club dance, jazz, 'contemporary' and 'street' styles. In terms of ethnicity, one is a British resident but American and of 'Hispanic' ethnicity, and the others British, two of African Caribbean ethnicity, two European and one South Asian. While undoubtedly the artists chosen reflect my own concerns, coming from different cultural and dance backgrounds they can also be seen to represent something of the range of artists currently creating dance works in London outside the framework of 'national touring' dance companies. Most importantly they all dance in their own choreography and it is this aspect of their particular perspective in relation to the issues raised so far in this study that I will focus on in this chapter.

4.1 Approaches to Making Dance for Performance

Issues raised in chapters two and three suggest the potential for dancers to be concerned with the relationship between apparent dualisms that the cultural and psychological anthropologist Thomas Csordas identifies as the 'terrain on which opposed terms meet' (Csordas, 1994, 20). Of particular concern is the relationship between phenomenological and semiotic accounts of dance. While undeniably my findings reveal the focus of my questions (see appendix 1), I will be suggesting that the dance artists I chose to interview could be viewed as having strategies for bringing their phenomenological experience of dancing into play with their understanding of dance as 'read' in a manner akin to a semiotic approach.

However I also found that there are a variety of strategies used to bring these two ways of knowing into play. This is clearly demonstrated by the different ways the artists had approached starting to make recent work. For instance, while Artist A had gone into a studio wanting to explore her emotional response to a situation through movement, Artist D's approach was, in his words, 'cerebral'. He realised that unlike many of his contemporaries he could not start a piece from just exploring movement in a studio but 'needed the necessity and urge to "make", coupled with a momentum, image or feeling as a purpose to start' (Artist D, 2003, edited 2007). While both would improvise and watch the video of their improvisations, Artist D would refer to video to see whether the movement images translated as he imagined, only later concerning himself with 'weaving his being through the structure' (Artist D, 2003, edited 2007). Artist A, very much working intuitively by exploring feelings through improvisation, was concerned to see (via video) how what she had improvised would 'read' to an audience and thought of the process of structuring that material as the more cerebral. Artist B's starting points seemed to combine intuitive responses to music with a strong sense of a body image and a particular concern to convey a kind of 'energy' through dance which correlated to his experiences not only of dance in clubs but of life more generally. However, ideas from life, theatre and film would be mulled over in preparation for work in the studio. Yet another artist, Gaby Agis, often drew on visual images as a source, sometimes finding these images coming to her as she responded physically to music. She translates these images into instructions to herself and her dancers who take it in turns to step back and 'witness' the movement, watching and reporting back to the others what they perceive.

Working with traditional 'non western' dance genres, the creative processes of artists Nina Anderson and Sushma Mehta also reveal strategies for playing between the different ways of experiencing dance. In Anderson's case a 'persona' she was exploring was linked with use of traditional music from Egypt that she explored partly through intuition and partly by reflecting on its structure. Her work, a structured improvisation drawing on Egyptian dance traditions in relation to a chosen piece of music, developed through a series of repeated structured improvisations with reflections on them (usually viewed on video) informing each rehearsal. While she sometimes tried to remember movement ideas that had worked previously as she danced, her ideal was to incorporate these as habitual responses allowing her to respond intuitively to the musical structure. In contrast, Mehta, working out of her background in kathak, started with a clearly articulated concept of the movements she wanted to work with, and was very concerned to see how the dance would look, willing to cut or change anything that did not work visually. She was however careful to rehearse movements until she had the 'feeling' of how it should be in her body.

Artists did not always stick to the same strategy in creating a dance. Although Artist D, for instance, usually had a clear visual idea that he would then explore more physically, in relation to the last section of a solo he had recently created he stated:

I had an image that it would just be this furious thing
but within the locomotion of this fury I didn't want
anyone to grab onto an image.

Artist D, 2003

I interpret these different uses of 'image' as trying to distinguish between different ways that dance is experienced. Artist D later clarified this: 'movement that gives very visual cues, conventional steps for example from a classical disposition (history) conventional social gestures/actions (waving goodbye)', that for D are often 'static', were felt by him to encourage an audience to interpret it in relation to 'past references which took away from the premise of entering an unknown' (Artist D, 2007). By concerning himself with the dynamics of this 'fury' he may be viewed as encouraging the audience to draw on their experiences of physicality to interpret the dance without reference to visually symbolic references. Similarly, for Gaby Agis, there was recognition that whilst some people would respond to the visual images created by dance, for others, or at other moments, movement could be interpreted in relation to bodily experience:

The body has a memory - So maybe a certain note in the music or a certain look on a dancer or a certain relationship between two dancers, or a certain energy of a movement, or the whole experience, or the whole atmosphere clicks them into something in their life and they have an experience.

Agis, 2003

This artist's approach seemed to focus on creating dance that would have the potential to offer different 'resonances' for people, both visually and kinaesthetically. She was particularly aware that what the audience brought to the performance would affect their experience.

Within the context of a performing art it is hardly surprising that for all the artists the creative process included reflection on how the dance would be perceived. This is such an integral feature of ballet and 'contemporary' dance and, as Mehta's account reveals, much theatre dance more generally, that it

is taken for granted. However what these interviews began to highlight was the complexity of the processes informing the artists' understanding of how their dance would be perceived by others. In discussion artists' statements might seem to draw on a number of terms relating to both phenomenology and semiotics in a manner that could appear theoretically naïve. While undoubtedly dancers are more schooled in movement than philosophical niceties, there is the possibility that this mix of terms is the result of attempts to describe the complex interrelationship between personal experience of dancing, experience of watching others dance and reflecting on how others respond to both of these. It may be that dance artists are particularly able to negotiate just the terrain Csordas refers to. To this end they may also be seen as being particularly adept at a form of self monitoring that, as discussed in chapter three in relation to the theories of Michel Foucault, can be seen as a feature of modern society.

4.2 Shifting Perspectives

The monitoring of their own movement, through the use of mirror, video and/or feedback from teachers, peers and audiences seems to provide artists with a heightened sense of how they will be perceived. For instance, during one interview, Artist A was looking for the first time at a video of some improvisation in which she felt she had been concentrating on feeling, developing movement from an emotional source. Initially she recognised that in spite of consciously trying not to be too judgemental while improvising she was perhaps 'twenty five percent aware' of how it looked. As the interview progressed she reported that there were 'no surprises' on the video and that she was more aware of the movement than she had thought. It seems she had become adept at monitoring the images she created even while not consciously focussing on this (Artist A, 2002).

When questioned how she thought she could do this she referred back to her training, particularly to the use of mirrors in ballet class, commenting that she was more aware of the spatial content than the dynamic content of her movement. It is commonly accepted that conventional dance training ingrains a way of moving, 're-educating' muscles (Lawson, 1975) so that by habit movements adhere to a particular aesthetic without the performer having to focus consciously on this intention.

Even outside formal traditions ingraining the right style can be important. For instance, Artist B, who uses improvisation within a structured performance, emphasised at the beginning of his first interview how 'energy' and 'being inside the music' were all important to his sense of his movement. Yet he also revealed that when he started dancing in clubs and before he went to dance college, he and his contemporaries all used their bedroom mirrors to check they had the right 'style'.

There has always been a mirror. From the beginning when I was going to the club, from growing up, there has always been a mirror ...When I was at home I used to go upstairs- In the bedroom there's a mirror. Every dancer had a mirror and most clubs had a mirror...

Artist B, 2003 (edited 2007)

While those working from kathak, Egyptian dance and street and jazz traditions appear to be very willing to use mirrors and video to monitor the look of their work, in some 'contemporary' dance practice the use of mirrors and to some extent video is frowned on: Siobhan Davies, a leading 'contemporary' dance choreographer ensured her recently purpose built studio was mirror free. The three 'contemporary' dance artists (A, D and Agis)

did not use mirrors and while video featured in a number of artists' rehearsals, Artist D and Agis were also wary of video. For Artist D this meant there was sometimes a dilemma whether to trust the video or his own intuition. That he tended to trust the video was linked to his ultimate acceptance of dance being viewed as a 'visual art' (Artist D, 2004). However the importance he placed on feedback from knowledgeable peers counteracted this emphasis on video and perhaps suggests his recognition of the importance of experiencing dance as more than a series of visual images. The artist least reliant on mirror or video was Agis. She preferred to rely on feedback from 'witnesses' and having worked quite intensely with film recognised:

The thing with video is that you have to get it all in the frame and quite often with my work you can't get everything in the frame...you can't get the detail. Its like breath – How are you going to get breath in the video? How are you going to get the relationship between this person (and) this person? How are you going to get that sense of energy between...that's sometimes quite translucent...

Agis, 2003

While Agis was the least reliant on mirror or video to monitor her dance she was no less aware of how she appeared to audiences. In fact, she was perhaps more easily able than some of the other artists to answer questions about how people responded to her. Her considerable experience of not only training and performing but working with film and being photographed may well have informed this awareness, but it is also perhaps linked to her practice of releasing technique. For this artist, it is the very awareness of her movement that she recognises has been ingrained through training. Agis reported other people perceived the legacy of her training (particularly in releasing technique) even in an everyday context:

I think if you are involved in working with your body you have a whole sense of yourself outside in a context of the environment. You have such different awarenesses, a physical awareness and emotional awareness... So I notice that even as I walk, other people are aware that I am a dancer- that I have a deportment and a way of moving...

Agis, 2003 (edited 2007)

Whilst traditional western theatre styles, such as ballet, used the mirror and the ballet master's instruction to encourage dancers to adopt the 'correct' movement habits, in much current western 'contemporary' dance (as opposed to current dance drawing on a range of traditions) the emphasis has shifted to becoming self aware in relation to proprioceptive feedback. Particularly in the more experimental forms of 'contemporary' dance, dancers are encouraged not to focus on positions in relation to their mirror image. Instead, the emphasis on a bodily focus through techniques such as Skinner releasing technique, Body Mind Centring®, and body orientating techniques such as Alexander and Feldenkreis have offered dancers the techniques to become aware of, and thus modify very subtly, the details of their movement in relation to their own sense of dynamic alignment and physical balance. It could be argued that in turning away from the use of the mirror, dancers are becoming more sophisticated in monitoring their actions and not less concerned with how they are perceived. These dancers demonstrate a high level of what might be termed embodied sensitivity that is valued in its own right rather than being viewed as instrumental to perfecting the ability to perform difficult moves. Although they may have adopted different strategies to those working in more traditional dance forms, through self monitoring in training and rehearsal these dancers may also be seen as having a sophisticated sense of how they seem to others. This can be drawn on in the

process of performance, the experience of which may also further develop their awareness.

4.3 Experiences of Performance

If the artists may be viewed as negotiating the boundaries between the phenomenological and the semiotic in the interrelated processes of training, creating and rehearsing, it is perhaps in performance that there is most seepage across these boundaries. In the interviews with the artists there seems to be a current concern with the phenomenological experience of shared perceptions of audience and performer as the 'energy' of performance.

I think it's a dialogue or an exchange... of sensations, of memories, of energies, of resonances with something the artist has communicated...

Agis, 2003

It was very shamanistic and there were points within that where the audience, the whole audience went silent. The state of the audience changed, presence changed and it changed through her. Within her performance she was able to embody something that altered space change and its effect was felt...

Artist D, (describing Deborah Hay), 2004 (edited 2007)

You can feel them [the audience] as well. They give you energy or they are like holding energy... I don't know how you just know.

If you can't feel the audience you are not reaching out - by throwing yourself over there - even if they are cold

Artist B, March 2003

When a performance is felt to have been successful the artists tend to experience some sense of shared communication. It is not just that the artist utilises a semiotic system and the audience 'understand' but that there is a shared experience of communicative exchange. Or, as emerged from a discussion with Nina Anderson and Artist B, the 'energy' dancers talk about is not always a dynamic quality that is perceived in the movement but is a sense of shared experience of the movement (Artist B and Anderson, 2005ⁱ). Perhaps this is what underpins the popularity of phenomenological accounts of dance as they give value to the in-the-moment experience rather than breaking dance down into its symbolic parts. Such moments of communication, which I remember as being valuable in my experiences of performing, seemed to be an important part of dance for all the artists. However they do not seem to be dependent on meaning being completely fixed, there being recognition that what audiences experienced as having been communicated could be surprising. Agis for example reported being slightly taken aback (until she considered more of their perspective), at one person's association of her work with their camping holidays (Agis, 2007).

From my perspective, based in the traditions of ballet and 'contemporary' dance, Sushma Mehta's account of a concept in South Asian dance was particularly interesting. Out of the traditions discussed in these interviews, kathak is perhaps the most prescribed mode of communication in terms of

established mimetic gestures and performance conventions. Communication in this dance form might be thought of quite easily in semiotic terms. However as Mehta talked of 'rasa' it seemed to me that what she was describing, while depending to some extent on a semiotic system, had an experiential aspect that was more in tune with a phenomenological approach to dance than I had expected:

We have a concept called 'rasa'. That's the most important concept in South Asian Dance. As an aesthetic principle it is the essence of a work of art. It is evoked in the sharing of an experience by the audience and the performer. So the performer does something and the audience feel it. It's a shared experience, shared aesthetic experience...

Mehta, 2003 (edited 2007)

This artist described how Asian audiences usually show their appreciation very audibly, but maintained that even without the audience's exclamations or clapping, this sense of shared experience can exist:

In the west there's no tradition of that but somehow you can get the vibe from the audience in the live theatre you can get the vibe...

It's how people are responding to you, and to an Indian performer that is the most important thing. Very important because if a performance does not evoke rasa (it literally means the flavour or the juice, as an aesthetic principle it is the essence) - There might just be one moment when you feel goose pimples- because you like something so much. You feel it. As an audience you feel it - Someone has communicated it to you.

If the performance is good and the performers are good at communicating and they have been able to communicate (and) it might be just for a moment, just a split second where they just come together. They journey together. You have taken the audience with you.

Mehta, 2003

A similar tradition, in terms of there being conventions of how to use the voice and clapping in response to a dance performance, was also the experience of Nina Andersonⁱⁱ. She questioned whether in the more silent performing environment, the performer's perception in performance of whether the audience was 'cold' or 'warm' was more to do with how they felt (Anderson, 2003). When confronted with a quiet audience, which at first was strange within the context of traditional Egyptian dance, she had felt it was important to trust her own sense of how the performance had gone. However, she was also aware that over the years she had 'come to look for the more subtle signs of appreciation rather than always expecting the audience to react in a more overt way' (Anderson 2007b). While it may well be that at times performers can be deluded about their communicative rapport with their audience, it is possible that through more experience of performing to (almost) silent audiences they have become sensitive to tiny changes in the space, the result of how people change their breathing and posture depending on how they feel about what they are watching. For her part, when her experience of being an audience was questioned, Anderson distinguished between appreciating the skill of a dancer and being 'really into a performance'. She felt this may be related to the perception of the performers. Some performances she observed 'you feel that emotionally they've kind of got you somewhere' whereas in other performances the dancers were reported to be 'distant or disappeared somewhere' (Anderson, 2003).

For both these artists there was a sense of how the techniques of their tradition could be used to establish communication with the audience. For example Mehta indicated that within her tradition it was clear that a sense of

shared experience was dependent on the audience having some understanding of the dance conventions utilised:

What we call rasika – an informed audience with some knowledge and that rasa happens when there is an understanding – to some extent.

Mehta, 2003

Albeit in different ways, all the artists, while not resorting to an expressionist belief in their movement being universally communicable, seemed to be edging towards an understanding of dance performance in which the phenomenological experience of communication is dependent on, but somehow not quite contained by, semiotic systems.

4.4 Accounting for the Dancers' Experiences within Semiotics

In considering the artists' accounts of dance as communicative, the sociologist Edward Varela's approach to semiotics may be helpful. This seems to allow for the placing of 'significant acts' within an interactive social context that allows for the phenomenological first person experience of interactions to inform the semiotic system. Such a semiotics could thus draw on the phenomenological experience of performance and is posited by Varela as an alternative to phenomenological approaches to dance such as Sheets-Johnstone's (discussed in chapter two) which he finds problematic in that they propose a 'force of bodily intention that is as ghostly as the force of the Cartesian mind' (Varela, 1997, 219). Critical of Sheets-Johnstone's later development of her phenomenological approach to dance, Varela suggests her formulation of 'thinking in movement' depends on a concept of mind as a 'fundamental dynamic of kinetic rationality that is non linguistic (not simply pre-linguistic)' (Varela, 1997, 233). For Varela, such a concept seems to make

linguistic rationality a later addition in human evolutionary development that still raises the problem of its relationship to the (moving) body. Varela's own approach to resolving the dualist problem is to propose that:

The organism is an individual entity but the body is a cultural entity – it is embodied in a substantial person with its pure agency.

Varela, 1997, 281

He thus supports the semasiology of Drid Williams discussed in chapter two:

The concept of the signifying act allows us to deal systematically with the enacted body, that is, the person agentially deploying a semiotic system for body movement in the cultural space of social action.

Varela, 1997, 221

By focusing on role of the agentic socially interacting person, Varela's contribution to semiotics is to draw on the later work of Merleau-Ponty to propose a framework for a semiotics of signifying lingual and action signs that are the products of human agency. However, Varela is also very keen to argue that capturing the first person experience of performing action signs through movement scores records 'talk from the enacted body' (Varela, 1997, 287) in a manner superior to words. Whilst Varela's viewpoint fits those dance forms that depend on clearly articulated spatial and temporal gestures, it may be that his prioritising of notational representation does not account for what is important to some current dance practices. In particular those artists taking improvisation into performance seem to focus more on the 'energy' of interactions than their spatial/temporal content. For them the communicative

relationship in performance, both between dancers and between the performers and the audience is becoming of increasing importance:

When I see improvisational dance work I sit back and ride the waves. As decisions are made in real time and manifested in action it takes on a natural cycle - evolution. If the performers can keep their egos at bay and allow the bigger picture to develop this cycle moves in waves regardless of specifics in space. I am taken on a ride, I no longer see points in space as this organic animal has taken on a life of its own and is not bound by structures.

Artist D, 2004 (edited 2007)

Whether notational symbolic systems or words best capture this relationship is open to question. Notation systems, such as Labanotation, capture the movements of body parts in space and time. Ironically one could argue that this fits the traditional model of dance as clearly articulated spatial /temporal gestures that can be seen as embodying the dualist preoccupation with the mindful controlling of bodies in space and time. Yet there are currently other ways of conceptualising dance beginning to emerge.

Nevertheless, Varela's placing of the understanding of significant (dance) actions in a phenomenological context relates to that sense dance artists develop of how others experience their dance, drawing on this to inform their work. All the artists, whether working for clarity of rehearsed action or to reveal their sensitive response to the moment, at times seem to blur the boundaries between (phenomenological) experience and (semiotic) reflection in performance, being at once in the moment of the dance and conscious of their dance as the subject for another's perception.

4.5 Recognising the 'Lived Body'

Through training, creative practice, rehearsal and performance dancers develop an awareness of their movement and a sense of how they may be perceived by others that informs their ability to perform with embodied sensitivity and experience their performance as communication. In this they may be seen as blurring the boundaries, not only between the dualisms of phenomenology and semiotics, but between self and other. Non dancers such as academics, less practised in embodied sensitivity, seem to still be able to recognise this sensitivity in the dancers and this may be a feature of what is currently valued in dance. This perception of difference between those practised in embodied sensitivity (such as dancers) and those who recognise their comparative lack of bodily awareness is interesting in the context of current cultural concerns with the legacy of dualism. As part of his complex discussion of existential phenomenological solutions to the problem of the Cartesian legacy, Varela suggests that the concept of the 'lived body' is a 'sensitising but not definitive conceptual solution to the problem of the disembodied actor in the behavioural sciences' (Varela, 1997, 217). It is the tacit acceptance in Varela's paper that within western society there is a need to be sensitised to the problem of disembodiment that offers an insight into the value placed on the dancers' embodied sensitivity: a perceived need, observed by Varela, for a sensitising to the 'body as lived' is paralleled amongst dancers both in terms of their own performance skills and also in the perceptual skills of their audiences.ⁱⁱⁱ Since, in Britain it is the study of 'contemporary' dance that predominates in academic institutions, it is not surprising if this parallel is most prevalent within 'contemporary' dance. 'Contemporary' dance that emphasises subtle qualitative aspects of movement is popular with audiences ready to forgo more obvious virtuosic displays. Even in London it has a relatively small audience who often attend the more experimental venues and events. The dancers interviewed were

very aware that there is often a tension between the obviously virtuosic that is popular with wider audiences and the skills needed to demonstrate a heightened bodily awareness. There was also a sense that the latter was in some way more artistically valuable and only perceived by the more discerning members of an audience. Since such attitudes tend to be a feature of more experimental contemporary dance they were thus most evident amongst the 'contemporary' dancers questioned. However, a sense that audiences sometimes lack the ability to perceive the subtler qualities of their dance certainly pervaded discussions with Artist B, Anderson and Mehta, although here this was also linked to problems of cross cultural understanding that will be explored further in chapter five.

4.6 Improvisation as Phenomenological Experience

An emphasis on embodied sensitivity is particularly important to those using improvisation in performance. Dance improvisation places value on the intuitive in-the-moment response and prizes creative and individual reactions. Arguably a current interest in performance as communicative experience accounts for some of the popularity of improvisation not only as a creative tool but as part of a dance work. In performance the audience may enjoy those moments when dancers seem to communicate through movement in fresh ways, having to respond to the other performers, the sound or the space at that moment, rather than relying on a rehearsed sequence. Improvised dance is perhaps the archetype transitory event to describe in relation to the phenomenological field. With its emphasis on the here and now there is no time to stand back and reflect on the dance, no score or exact repetition to analyse and no objects to collect after it is over. This can be illustrated through reference to my own different experiences of dance: in

studying ballet I experienced the conscious capturing of bodily motility to work towards a natural seeming grace that was nevertheless precise in pre-conceived measurements of time and space. Later in Agis' improvisational classes based in releasing techniques, I had to learn a means of a more diffused consciousness which permeated different layers of awareness and aimed towards responsiveness *within* time and space.

For those, like Artist A, who want to set their choreography, improvisation may be a rehearsal tool for finding different ways of moving and responding to a stimulus. For Artist A this meant exploring a perceived disjuncture between the flowing, sweeping movements which came easily to her when improvising and her own personality which she felt to be more 'spikey'.

There is a certain quality of movement I have to admit that I'm trying to break out of it because I find that it's – it's stuck in me and I can't break out of it. To watch I find it monotonous and it's a kind of softness. I don't know if that relates to me in real life – I don't think that it does ...

I guess that is quite a lot to do with the way I have been training over the past five, six (may be longer) years. I've been doing a lot of release work because I feel comfortable that way in my body. It's the easiest way for me to move, it feels natural to me, whereas anything that demands more percussive quality, anything that demands more suddenness, I find quite strenuous and quite - well it's almost like a shock to the system. But I think those shocks can be good for you sometimes and that you need to do that to yourself now and then and I think I would like to try to explore it a bit more in the movement, to break myself out of what is my set quality ...

Perhaps it's really where did the movement come from? You know, the softer movement, was it not from such a true emotion? Maybe perhaps that's something to do with it as well.

Artist A, 2002

For Artist B, improvisation revealed the sense of individual expression in performance, the inspiration for which, in his case, came from dancing and watching dance in clubs:

So if you don't go back to where you came from
[dancing in clubs] you will lose it and you forget how
to improvise - Forget how to feel the music - You'll just
be counting. Counting's alright - After you see
someone counting you want to see them dance- and
that is where what I call the spice is - Its inside if
you've got the confidence to bring it out.

Artist B, 2003 (edited April 2007)

In relation to the discussion of Best's criticism of traditional expression theory and dance in chapter two, it can also be seen from Artist B's comments that a dancer's understanding of the personal experience of dance can be important to what they value in other dancers. There seems to be a recognition of those who have an enhanced personal sensitivity to the experience of moving which can be drawn on in communicative interaction.

Whether artists used improvisation in rehearsal only or in performance, there was an implication that consciousness was experienced as being layered and that artists devised improvisational strategies for 'delving deeper' into layers that were perceived to be less saturated with those movement habits ingrained through training. This seems to be related to an interest in improvisation as a means to draw on the subconscious within a set framework. Elements of such a framework may be consciously set and thus easily agreed on. What is harder to define is the extent to which subliminally absorbed norms may impact on what are often viewed as creative 'free' choices. Some of the rules that structure an improvisation may be agreed.

Depending on the context this could be rules about who goes where and when in freestyle 'dance offs', quite detailed movement tasks in a 'contemporary' dance piece or the range of movements that can be related to a particular form of music in Egyptian dance. There are also the rules governed by elements of style which often can be articulated if necessary, perhaps most easily in terms of what is not acceptable. For instance the club dancers when 'freestyling' were concerned to keep their style 'macho' as distinct from the more feminine jazz dance they saw on television. Yet there is a sense that beyond the stated rules there may be others that are harder to define. While dancers may talk about 'letting go' when improvising, I felt that there were occasions in rehearsal, particularly in 'contemporary' dance, where certain moves, although they fulfilled the stated function, seemed to be vetoed because they did not quite fit in with some implicitly understood criteria. Unlike some older improvisational traditions (in Flamenco, Egyptian dance and Bharatanatyam, for example) where there are clear conventions regarding what style of movement can be used in what context, the current 'contemporary' dance culture is more transient. I wondered to what extent the norms that governed movement choices could be stated but were not for various reasons, or whether they are only understood in movement terms.

Towards the end of the research I had the opportunity to take part in a discussion with some dancers experienced in improvisation in 'contemporary' dance. In relation to my questioning about how these dancers viewed improvisation in other dance genres Charlotte Derbyshire, one of participants, responded:

It's a really interesting question- It's difficult because in a way those forms, [seen] from the outside ([while]I don't know much about any of them)...they've all got their set forms and shapes and patterns which people play in and

out of. And that's an interesting thought because maybe, we do too.

win lab, Independent Dance, 2006

This statement met with the laughter of recognition from the others present suggesting there are recognised normative limits on the 'freedom of expression' in 'contemporary' dance.

4.7 Recognising Normative Influences

All the artists interviewed were certainly able to define some key dance norms that affected how they might be judged by an audience. Through the various interviews emerged norms that affected the audience's expectations in relation to age, ability, body shape, health, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. In terms of those that were articulated in initial interviews there was little that would surprise anyone involved either in dance or in reflection on any of the above areas. However what also emerged, even in the first interviews, were the ways in which artists drew on their experience of these norms in creating work for themselves to perform and how this was bound up with their sense of how others perceived them.

In Choreographing Difference, Ann Cooper Albright posits that 'contemporary' dance,

...foregrounds a responsive dancing body, one that engages with and challenges static representations of gender, race, sexuality, and physical ability, all the while acknowledging how deeply these ideologies influence our daily experience

Cooper Albright, 1997, vii

In contrast with the rather confrontational attitude this might suggest, not all the artists seemed always to be focussed on the potential significance of their own embodiment to challenge the prevailing norms. For instance Anderson had been made to be very aware during her training that she was larger than an ideal body size and due to both her physical proportions and ethnicity found herself categorised as more suited to folk rather than to classical Egyptian dance. However while she had been made only too aware of the pressure on her to be thinner and more flexible she did not give any clear indications in her initial interview of a strategic representation of her body image as subverting the demand for dancers to be slim. In a sense she tried not to dwell too much on her body weight as if she did she feared she would 'never get going' (Anderson, 2003).

Although the cultural context of dance and embodiment are currently quite popular academic subjects in dance institutions, a questioning of just what is embodied in a dance does not seem to have yet fully permeated into all choreographers' practices. Rather it seems as if some practice is still influenced by the view articulated in a key British dance text from the 1980s:

The basic movement material of the dance is impregnated with meanings with which the choreographer, performers and audience have come to terms.

Hodgens, 1988, 65

This position, different to Cooper Albright's, provides a context in which it is not surprising that some dancers do not tend to focus consciously on the significance of their 'embodiment'. If everyone has 'come to terms' with the meanings 'impregnated' in the basic movement material of a dance there might seem little point in reflecting on them or challenging them.

However, although it was not always articulated as such, it did seem to me as if these artists, all working outside the mainstream dance companies, had a sense of how they could play on audience's expectations in relation to their physical presence. Artist A, on reflection towards the end of the research of these issues stated:

When I was training I was encouraged to think of my body as a geometric tool but in reality when an audience perceives a performer they are seeing the gender, the body shape, the hair colour, whether they are attractive or not. You can't get away from that.

Artist A, 2007

While perceptions of gender were not a key issue in the piece she was working on when interviewed, Artist A had referred to these issues in a previous work. Anderson, while initially reticent about how her dancing responded to issues of the idealised feminine form, was aware of her work relating to her interest in revealing the African influence on Egyptian dance. As one of very few Black artists performing Egyptian dance who has found herself being categorised by teachers as suited to 'folk', she draws on these expectations to propose, in dance terms a different perspective on how

western audiences view Egyptian dance. To western audiences, rather than emphasising Egypt as the site of oriental exoticism she draws attention to the African influences on the dance. As the research progressed, it became clearer that in contemplating how western audiences viewed Egyptian dance, Anderson was interested in exploring approaches to the viewer:viewer relationship that did not take western assumptions about gender for granted. If in her dancing she is beginning to challenge norms of idealised femininity, her perspective is complex in that it draws on feminism interwoven with a cross cultural consciousness.

For Mehta the simple facts of performing alongside a cast of dancers from different ethnic backgrounds drawing on training in kathak, 'contemporary' dance, yoga and martial arts, helped her work have resonances for different cultural groups. In presenting a work exploring issues of immigrant populations this helped to establish a context pertinent to more than one cultural group.

Working in 'contemporary' dance, Artist D's experience of not having a 'conventional' body but being seen as rather 'tall and lanky' was not all negative. In spite of some problems this caused fitting into other people's companies he looked on his physical distinctness also as a 'blessing'. He was perhaps the most able to respond easily to my question about the body as constraint and/or inspiration. 'People have an image of me moving in a certain way... I'll try to push beyond that' (Artist D, 2003). He seemed to enjoy exploring ways of moving that were new for him and thus changing people's expectations of him. Recognising that an audience would try to 'place you' in relation to your physical appearance he seemed to like the fact that 'they can't really pigeon-hole me', something that also seemed to be linked to his

ethnic background which he described as 'Latin American but with links to indigenous people and Europeans' (Artist D, 2003, edited 2007).

The two artists who were perhaps the most aware of challenging audiences' expectations in a manner most in keeping with Cooper Albright's (1997) understanding of 'contemporary' dance were Artist B and Agis. The latter felt free to play on, even disrupt expectations linked to images stemming from ideals of female beauty that had been projected on to her when younger: 'That was a part of who I was and therefore people come to see you in that context and expect to see something portrayed in that light' (Agis, 2003).

For Artist B, the presumption that certain dance forms are less sophisticated than others meant that he felt some audiences were not able to fully appreciate what he created. To avoid his work being dismissed as 'only entertainment' he was developing a number of strategies to challenge expectations. In one discussion he revealed that he had started using text to explain to the audience the culture and the complexity of the dance they were watching (Artist B, 2005).

While for all the artists there seemed to be a sense of playing with the audience's expectations, for those seeking to present work to a wider audience this was perhaps tempered by a concern to stimulate a positive response from the audience that may be related to the artists' valuing a sense of communication. The artists seemed to be aware of differences between audiences, some of which might relate to differences in how they responded to challenges to established norms.

Performance as communication seems to depend to some extent on a culturally based but often intuitive absorption of the significance of movement that draws on the understanding of behavioural norms. Some norms are deeply woven into everyday life and affect assumptions made with regard to the look of dancers and what is understood of their actions in relation to the spatial and temporal structures of everyday life. Given the pace of change, at least at a superficial level, to contemporary life it is not surprising that changes in dance vocabularies and styles may also be quite rapid. In such a context it is possible that there are norms that even dancers are barely aware of and yet they may communicate a shared perspective of a particular group.

4.8 Implications for the Relationship between Dancer and Audience

The dance artists I interviewed had developed a range of strategies to make connections between the different ways of knowing their dance. Mirrors and increasingly video play an important role in informing them about how their dancing looks and this seems often to be linked to how they consider it might 'read' to their audience. However there is recognition that dance can be experienced as a communicative 'energy' that is harder to perceive on video and for this reason an artist may decide to rely on an account of their dance from a trusted 'witness'. This raises the issue of the significance of the presence of the dancer and the relationship with the audience. It may be helpful to think of both dancers and audiences as being able to experience dance through the interplay of phenomenological experience and interpretation of semiotic content. The dancer, rooted in the experience of dancing, has to draw on his/her imagination to have a sense of how his/her dance will 'read' to the audience, while the audience seeing the dance draws on their imagination to have a sense of what it must feel like to dance like that. Different emphases may be placed by the choreographer on how much

s/he imagines an audience responding to a visual image and how much to an imagined experience of moving, or kinaesthetic response. (Their choice of sound and design will be important here in shaping the audience's perception.) Visual images can often easily be 'read' and contribute to semiotic analysis of the dance. A kinaesthetic response, although stimulated by perception (visual and auditory) draws on the audience's proprioceptive experience of moving, bringing into play their movement culture by reinforcing, extending or challenging this.

For the artists participating in the research there is a conception that when a dance 'works,' audience and performer have a sense of some shared experience or 'energy'. This does not mean they would necessarily agree on a definition of what the dance 'means', nor feel that this is essential or even desirable. This sense of shared experience seems, to some extent, to be dependent on what could be viewed as a semiotic system but is also reliant on performer and audience experiencing the dance as a communicative phenomenon. This emphasis on the in-the-moment phenomenological experience of dance seems to be particularly important in relation to current practices that prioritise embodied sensitivity. Sensitivity to the 'moment' is allied to the ability of the dancer to respond to other dances and the performance environment and is particularly prized in improvisational performances.

The value placed on a sense of the shared experience of communication may lead to the temptation to think of this as some 'universal' attribute of dance performance. However, apart from the obvious bias in my choice of artists, a more general concern with those moments when the audience is caught up in the 'journey' of the dance may be revealing of a wider desire in

complex urban societies to experience contact with other people. For instance the sociologists Deidre Boden and Roger Friedland have noticed that modernity and the technological age are not antithetical to personal interactions in the manner some theorists suggest. Rather 'copresent interaction' is actively sought after:

The immediacy and inherent indexicality of all human existence means that the fine, fleeting, yet essentially social moments of everyday life anchor and articulate the modern macro order.

Friedland and Boden, 1994

One key question emerging from interviews with artists coming from very different dance traditions is the extent to which dance as communication depends on conventions that have to be learned. The traditional forms clearly articulate established codes that the audience is expected to be aware of before they are able to best appreciate the dance. Much 'contemporary' dance practice may eschew explicit convention, the emphasis being on the individuality of expression, yet it seems that there are expectations, albeit that a number of them may be only tacitly agreed. For some dance artists communication is important at a level that draws on the subconscious and is thus, in intention, different in communicative aim to everyday use of language and gesture. There is a sense, particularly in some 'contemporary' dance practice, that if an artist is going to engage an audience in his/her dance they have to communicate in a manner that 'goes beyond', or is at a 'deeper level' than the conventions of everyday discourse, be that verbal or kinetic. In order to achieve this, dancers may need to devise strategies to break down the movement habits, or norms, they have imprinted on their subconscious through training. In Varela's terms there may be a connection between language and gesture but it is important to the dancers that their gestures

communicate that which it is difficult to put into words. In pursuing this aspect of communication they may be following a tradition dating back to the pioneers of modern dance who searched for 'true' reflections of the psyche. However, whereas the 'great' dance artists of the early twentieth century could believe in the potential for dance that emanated from the psyche to be universally communicable, twenty-first century sensibilities are sceptical of such claims, questioning what hidden norms influence movement choices.

For artists the ability to reflect on what assumptions audiences may bring to a performance and how they thus might respond to the dancer's physical presence may inform their awareness of how the work may be perceived and thus support them in their quest to communicate. Both the dance styles and the movement cultures to which they are related are sustained by norms, not all of which will be articulated verbally. A traditional view that performers and their audience have 'come to terms' with the 'meaning' of the basic movement forms on which they draw does not account for performances in which the dancers and audience members may come from a range of both dance and cultural backgrounds. This traditional view may also be felt to have inhibited some artists from questioning how these norms affect how they are perceived even when they had negative experiences of behaviour reinforcing them. Others have developed quite a sophisticated understanding of normative expectations and might play on them to their advantage. For these artists a sense of the importance in performance of 'taking your audience with you' is perhaps interwoven with their challenges to established norms that might be expected in the postmodern context as described by Cooper Albright (1997).

While the choreographers questioned may have shown different levels of recognition of the significance of their embodiment, from a personal point of

view of immersion in dance theory, I have found that reflection on the significance of a dancer's embodiment can enrich appreciation of their work. Since the very nature of dance training is to ingrain a particular way of moving it can be interesting to reflect on what movement habits reveal not only about individual dancers but about their culture and environment. For instance, in watching Artist A's rehearsal videos, I appreciated the edgy movement she was beginning to develop alongside her more habitual soft, flowing, movement. In the context of her stated theme of love and loss, this seemed in keeping with the realities of coping with feelings of grief and anger. In relation to her embodiment in a wider culture the difference between this and her more usual dance movement seemed to speak of the conflict between the idealised harmony of the fluid moving, physically well balanced persona projected through 'release' dance, and the harshness of much life experience. Part of the attraction of fluid, harmonic dance may be that it can seem to sustain a belief that people can be in tune with 'nature', and can live in a state of ease with each other and with the organic flow of life. Yet, at least in contemporary London, evidence of the opposite is only too common. Seen this way, Artist A's choreographic experiments can be understood not only as exploring these emotions but as articulating the contradictions that are an integral part of contemporary life.

For the audience such reflections may offer rich insights into what they enjoy. In relation to the work of the artists with whom I talked, and more generally the work I see being made and presented at present in London, this perspective has offered some insights that will be explored more fully in relation to some of the norms that emerged through the research process. In general terms within (western) theatre dance, dance itself can currently be seen as reflecting concerns with globalisation and the dualist legacy of

rationalism. In their developed sense of bodily awareness some dance artists may be perceived as embodying the concept of the lived body and as such present a sensitising strategy as one solution to the problem of the 'disembodied mind' that will be further explored in chapter six. By being concerned with communication in a culturally diverse context in which what is given cannot be taken for granted, dance artists may raise issues concerned with inter cultural understanding and the fusion of new cultural identities that will be explored in chapters five and seven. For all the dance artists, a concern with the immediacy of communicative interaction in performance suggests a valuing of interpersonal interaction that may be perceived as an important antidote to the problems of contemporary society.

Notes to Chapter Four

ⁱ That Artist B seemed surprised that I did not view this as being an experience specific to 'black' dance suggests it may be more easily experienced in dance most closely related to one's own cultural experience.

ⁱⁱ Reading this Anderson felt there was a correspondence between 'rasa' and traditions in the appreciation of Egyptian dance.

ⁱⁱⁱ Similar concerns may also be seen in the visual arts' interest in body and the performative (Jones, 1998) and in calls for experiential sessions in bodily practices to be incorporated into the study of aesthetics (Shusterman, 1999).

5

Dance, Diversity and Appreciation

5.0 Introduction

The previous chapters have considered the potential significance of embodiment to the appreciation of dance. It has been suggested that within (western) theatre dance, movement is understood not only in relation to conventions in dance but also in the context of immersion within everyday culture. Consideration has been given to approaches to dance as discourse in which actions are culturally inscribed and in particular to the intertextual analysis of dance as proposed by Janet Adshead (1999), in which an emphasis is placed on interpreting dance in relation to different 'intertexts'. However, this has raised the problem that such an approach can lead to the appreciation of dance being reduced to consideration of the relative merits of the different discourses shaping how the dance is interpreted.

Consideration of artists' perspectives, in chapter four, emphasised that a focus on the interpretation of dance as 'read' may limit appreciation of the performance and that other approaches might allow for a fuller response. With reference to Paul Crowther's development of Kantian aesthetics in tandem with the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (discussed in chapter two), aesthetic appreciation of the ideas embodied in dance is understood to open up for reflection as related, but not bound, to concepts. What is understood in a work of dance viewed as art is the result of direct acquaintance with the work rather than the result of translation of the work. This emphasises the importance of the phenomenological experience of engagement with the work as art and in this regard it has been posited that

structured movement memories are drawn on, in a similar way to verbal concepts, to create and understand dance ideas that it may be found difficult to verbalise but which relate directly to the experience of culture as lived. While language is used to reflect on responses to a work, this should not lead to reducing a dance to the concepts that can be *said* to be embodied within it. In Crowther's terms, the concept of 'ontological reciprocity' offers an approach to art that allows for what is understood as embodied in the work to be dependent on the reciprocity of the subject:object relationship. This concept draws on the existential phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty to suggest how what is embodied in art draws on the phenomenological experience of self as inserted into the world. Responding to the work, the audience engages reciprocally with what has been created by another. In the acts of appreciating and talking about dance, clapping enthusiastically at a performance or otherwise communicating what is valued (or not) in a dance performance, audiences contribute to this ecology of the environment within which dance is created and performed.

However, within the ecology of western arts, in contrast to this intersubjective reciprocity, consideration of the subject:object relationship has previously often emphasised the concept of 'aesthetic distance'. At its most extreme, this resulted in the formalist aesthetics of the second quarter of the twentieth century, modified versions of which are still drawn on in support of judgements about dance (Copeland, 1990) that prioritise formal qualities. The ability of audiences to respond from a suitable 'aesthetic distance' can be seen as rooted in ways of conceiving the dualist relationship between body:mind and self:other. In contrast, discussions with dance artists suggest that the phenomenological experience of the appreciation of a performance can include a sense of shared communication between performer and

audience, momentarily experienced as a dissolving of the dualist experience of body:mind, self:other. Paradoxically, such an experience may be savoured in aesthetic terms. In contrast to earlier expressionist aesthetic theories which emphasised communication (or in Tolstoy's terms the transmission of feeling), amongst the artists I talked to there is recognition that whatever is involved in this sense of 'shared experience', such communication is open to variations according to the audience's own cultural and dance experiences.

Following the artists in allowing for a more fully embodied 'reciprocal' approach to the aesthetic suggests changes in the ecology of the arts. In discussion and reflection about their and my own experience of dance in London, this will be further explored in relation to cultural changes in and beyond London that seem to affect how dance is appreciated. This chapter will focus on one aspect of cultural change, the diversity of London's population, exploring the ways in which a complex of attitudes to perceived 'ethnic differences' may influence what is understood as embodied in dance. Further I will be arguing that this not only has an impact on the appreciation of dance, but can have an influence on the artists that raises issues of their creative agency.

5.1 Dance and Diversity in the Capital

As the backdrop to presenting dance in performance, early twenty-first century London provides artists with a web of contradictions. In terms of ethnicity, the census in the first year of the new Millennium revealed almost 8% of the UK population to be from black and minority ethnic groups (Office for National Statistics, 2001). Nationally the British Government has developed strategies intended to promote cultural pluralism, respecting the differences between people of varied ethnicities, and, alongside the

amendments to the Race Relations Act, to combat racism. With 45% of people from black and minority ethnic groups being concentrated in London, approximately one in three of the capital's residents belong to this group (Office for National Statistics, 2001). It is not surprising that local government in London tends to make 'valuing diversity' a key theme promoted through policies and revealed in carefully representative images. Wherever artists draw on services in London, the values of diversity and equality of opportunity are everywhere enshrined in legal requirements, service level agreements, charters for 'customers' and organisations set up to protect people's 'rights'. Moreover the city's diversity features positively in how London is presented to the rest of the world, as exemplified in its being viewed as 'the key' to the city's bid for the 2012 Olympics (London 2012 archive, accessed April 2007). Yet the London bombings that greeted the news of the bid's success emphasised how the celebration of diversity and promotion of equality of opportunity takes place within a context in which the tensions and inequalities between different groups of people are rarely forgotten. Whether it is the subject of racially motivated attacks, the question of institutional racism within the police force, bombings by radical extremists or the politics of fringe parties, events, and the media's reporting of them, bring to the fore one issue after another that question the possibility of diversity being universally welcomed in London, however much politicians 'celebrate' it.

A strategy document published by the Greater London Authority claims:

The Capital's reputation as a multicultural city has been in the making for centuries. The vibrant mixture of diverse cultures is a major factor in the success of

London's profile. But there are inequalities that need to be addressed and historically, many diverse cultural organisations have been under resourced and not funded for sustainability.

Greater London Authority, 2004, Introduction

The funding for dance companies in London reflects the aim to address inequalities in the face of a legacy of funding patterns that historically supported national companies performing ballet and, more recently, the 'contemporary' dance forms that draw on predominantly American traditions of modern dance. The Arts Council of England's London Office's figures for 2003/6 (Arts Council of England, July 2003) show the companies receiving the largest shares of the public purse are still the established ballet companies, presenting the dominant form of (western) theatre dance, albeit one that is globally popular. If companies such as the Royal Ballet and English National Ballet are to support many dancers and compete for audiences and accolades in a highly competitive international milieu, they require large sums of moneyⁱ. This is likely to impinge on what is available out of a limited Arts Council dance budget to fund other companies.

'Contemporary' dance companies, with aesthetic roots in Europe and America, as a group, draw on the next largest tranche of money. However, in terms of individual companies those companies developing dance forms originating in Africa or Asia are funded at levels at least equal to the larger 'contemporary' dance companies. Although there are different ways of interpreting the figuresⁱⁱ, that over 2 million pounds in total per annum supported such companies in 2003-2006 represents over 10% of the regular funding for dance companies. In addition a number of smaller organisations and artists working locally with a whole range of dance forms are funded by the Arts Council via 'grants for the arts' and 'decibel', the latter initiative funding 'artists of African, Asian and Caribbean descent in England' (Arts

Council of England, not dated, accessed May 2007). With 'celebrating diversity' as one of the Arts Council's priorities, the decibel initiative was developed 'in recognition that black and minority ethnic (BME) artists and arts organisations are under-represented in the arts' (Arts Council England, not dated, accessed May 2007).

There is a long standing debate about diversity and dance in Britain that has centred on problems of definition and funding (Badejo, 1993). One key concern has been whether there should be more focus on supporting a range of dance forms that emanate from a full range of cultural traditions or on supporting dancers on the basis of their ethnicity. For instance ADAD (the association of dance of the African diaspora) is concerned with the support and development of dance forms emanating from the traditions of African diaspora rather than of black artists per se, but their current Programme Development Manager, Pamela Zigomo, is aware that this perspective is not universally held (personal communication with Pamela Zigomo, 14, May 2007).

In relation to regular support of the larger companies, the London Office of the Arts Council can perhaps be interpreted as working towards being representative of the nation's cultural heritages at a level broadly in keeping with a breakdown of the population in terms of the proportion of 'BME' to 'white British'. If at a larger, national level there has been a framework for relative cultural pluralism in the diversity of dance forms, from the evidence of a search of company web sites in 2005, it seems that during the funding period 2003-2006, diversity within a company was more prevalent among smaller, mainly 'contemporary' dance companies. Visits to the web sites of those companies supported by the London Office of the Arts Council on a

regular basis for the period 2003-2006, reveal that of the twelve London based dance companies listed (including the Royal Ballet, that is funded via support to the Royal Opera House), one 'contemporary' dance company with a diverse group of dancers has a stated mission to:

...explore and express an identity through
dance which reflects the growing cultural fusion
of contemporary society ...

www.uniondance.co.uk 1994/5

Another 'contemporary' dance company also has as mixed a make up as, say, a snapshot of the adults on an 'inner-London' street, while in two other contemporary dance companies there appears to be at least one dancer who would contribute to the company's diversity. Three other 'contemporary' dance companies reflect other aspects of diversity: one includes a number of disabled dancers, another dancers who are 'older' than the twenty to thirty-somethings filling the ranks of most dance companies and the third is known to draw on the experience of gay people and has recently included a disabled performer. Two other dance companies funded through the Arts Council both focus on contemporary approaches to South Asian dance traditions.

In terms of the range of dancers there is a marked contrast between these companies and Adzido, a company that primarily drew on traditional African dance forms that appeared to comprise only black dancers. In relation to ballet the picture was more complex. The photographs of the larger ballet companies revealed they drew on a mix of dancers perhaps representative of interest in ballet on a global stage: the large London based national ballet companies presented a mix of white European and 'Far Eastern' dancers with only the occasional black dancer, often appearing as a soloist or even star

performer. Although this has been changing even during the period of this research, the few black dancers in ballet tend to be male and come from South America rather than Africa, and rarely from Britain itself. Generally this is a reflection of the high quality of dance training in many South American countries and the small numbers of black British dancers trained to high standards in ballet. In terms of ethnicity, this may make it difficult for traditional ballet companies to incorporate diversity in a manner that would make them more reflective of their local communities. However, there is another issue that may be relevant in relation to the perceived ethnic range of performers in ballet companies. Traditionally ballet companies require a corps de ballet that is judged on its uniformity. In the 1960s in America, Brenda Dixon Gottschild remembers not being picked for a modern dance company because her skin colour would 'destroy the unity of the corps' (Dixon Gottschild, 2000, 147). In Britain, while the numbers of black dancers in ballet companies seems to be increasing, there may still be those who fear that audiences will judge what appears to them as a diverse corps as inferior to one incorporating less perceived difference. Whatever the reasons, the result is that in relation to the local London population, judging by the portraits of dancers currently on English National Ballet and the Royal Ballet web sites (www.ballet.org.uk and info.royaloperahouse.org, accessed April 2007), dancers whose features would be interpreted as revealing a strongly 'African' ethnicity still seem relatively under represented, especially amongst the women. This can result in a situation in which the presence of the occasional black ballet dancer tends to stand out since, given current sensitivities to issues surrounding ethnicity, their presence could be perceived as emphasising their difference. It is certainly the case that the few, such as the Royal Ballet's 'First Artist' Tyrone Singleton, are given quite a high profile through initiatives such as the Ballet Hoo! project (Birmingham Royal

Ballet/Channel 4/Diverse TV , 2007) and features in magazines such as Dancing Times (March 2007). This may have contributed to at least one dance critic recognising the changes that have resulted in the Royal Ballet's employing 'at least twelve non white dancers' (Dowler, 2007).

With what has been slow progress towards the inclusion of black dancers in ballet, (and judging from Dowler's comment above, a lack of sensitivity in the wider dance community about some of the surrounding issues), it is not surprising that dance companies have been established, drawing on African dance traditions and in which white dancers are similarly rare. In this context, the Arts Council's financial support of Adzido to a level beyond that given to any 'contemporary' dance company helped to promote equality at a macro level while at the same time perhaps establishing the norm that many large scale national touring dance companies would have a repertory and cohort of performers that fulfil the demands of a specific, culturally delineated dance tradition. However, during the period of this research Adzido lost it's funding, their last performances being in 2005. The reasons for this seem to have been complex but in part were due to the company not meeting targets set by the Arts Council of England. The company's failure to live up to expectations seems to have been generally agreed (Ismene Brown, 2005), although in the same year an Arts Council of England report revealed people's concerns regarding the 'predominance of Eurocentric definitions of quality at curatorial, programming and management (i.e. decision-making) levels within the arts infrastructure' (Arts Council England, 2005, 9).

Given the wide debate about 'multiculturalism' in the media after the London bombings of 7th July 2005, what the Arts Council would do with the money not going to Adzido was interesting. The unofficial view from artists was that it

was being split among younger black British dance artists whose work represents a less recognisably traditional, more 'contemporary' approach. This may seem to be in keeping with the Arts Council's priorities for dance from 2007-2011. Believing that dance 'connects people across the divides of language, faith, race and generation' their list of priorities commences with the statement that they 'will fund a portfolio of organisations that are contemporary in their approach and committed to engaging people in their work in new ways' (Arts Council England, 2006). Although it is quite possible to work in 'contemporary' ways within traditional dance forms, this statement, in combination with the emphasis on crossing cultural divides, does seem to suggest that it may be harder to gain funding for more traditional forms, unless it can be shown how a new contemporary approach is being adopted and how the dance will be appreciated across cultural boundaries. While large scale organisations may demonstrate this through more experimental projects running alongside more traditional work (for example the Royal Ballet can support Wayne McGregor as resident choreographer, and a range of 'community' projects alongside maintaining productions of the 'classics'), for smaller companies, how to keep a sense of tradition while exploring what satisfies the Arts Council's demand for a 'contemporary approach' may be more complex. Whatever the reasons for the funding changes and how funding has been apportioned, artists seem to perceive that working within the context of traditional 'non western' dance forms is less likely to be supported by the Arts Council than those that more consciously draw on contemporary themes or 'newer' dance vocabularies or structures.

5.2 Perspectives on Diversity in Britain

Perceptions of 'difference' in relation to dancers (rather than dance forms) in British dance companies can be thought of as being founded in

circumstances particular to British experiences. For example the sociologist Christian Jopke has analysed some of the complexities of 'race relations' in Britain as being founded in tensions between the 'legacy of Empire' and a liberal approach to 'race relations management' that proposes 'mutual tolerance' of difference (Jopke in Giddens 1997, 223). As Jopke points out, the transition from Empire to Commonwealth resulted in the difficult question of who could have the same rights as 'territorial citizens':

Tragically, in the British constellation of a 'coloured' colonial periphery and a 'white' core nation it was impossible to accomplish without, in effect [dividing] the 'ins' and 'out' along racial lines.

Jopke in Giddens 1997, 224

This then may be one factor behind research that demonstrates how many people of Caribbean parentage born in Britain, although having full British Citizenship, do not feel British:

Despite a strong sense of social and cultural commonality with the white British, most Caribbeans found it difficult to lay claim to [being] British. The difficulty was almost entirely based on the knowledge that the majority of British people did not acknowledge the commonality... The Caribbeans felt that they were constantly reminded that they were not accepted in a variety of ways including discrimination in employment, harassment, invisibility and stereotyping in the media and glorification of an Imperial past in which they were oppressed. This racism rather than any sense of distinctive ethnic heritage was seen as an obstacle to feelings of unity with the white British majority.

Modood, Beishan and Vindee, 1994, 216-217

For Thomas F. De Frantz (2004) writing about African American dancers, a common experience of white oppression provides a sense of commonality amongst the diaspora that is part of black people's pan African identity. While there are undoubted differences in the social development of Britain, the

combined legacy of Empire and racism has led to a parallel black British experience of oppression. Given this context, a television interview (BBC, 2003) with Carlos Acosta, guest principal dancer with the Royal Ballet, in which he makes reference to his family name as revealing their historical background as slaves, edited together with shots of him as the only black dancer on the stage, could make it difficult not to consider his ethnicity when watching him perform with the Royal Ballet.

For other artists, their experiences in relation to their perceived ethnicity can be of central importance to their work. Lack of employment opportunities and a sense of frustration are features of Artist B's early dance experiences in clubs that informed his later work:

We would get our frustration out on the dance floor and that is where the energy comes from. So I take that same energy from when I was young and put it in the studio.

'Cos you didn't have a job or couldn't get work -You go to a club and you see another person dancing and you sort of compete and because you didn't have a job or anything much, the dance was more serious than anything else.

Artist B, 2003

A comparative lack of success in gaining employment and the social deprivation linked to this has undoubtedly been a feature of life for ethnic minorities in Britain and has been well documented (Brown and Gay 1985). From discussions it is apparent that the experiences of both the British African Caribbean artists I talked to would accord with Brown and Gay's findings. What is less well documented is the interrelationship between ethnicity and specifically British attitudes to class. This is perhaps due to differences in approach to the relationship between class and ethnicity, varying from Marxist approaches which focus on the need for new sources of cheap labour to more complex approaches which see class, ethnicity and gender differences as interwoven (Bradley, 1992). While problematic, it is interesting to reflect on these dimensions jointly since so much of the British class system saturates perceptions of the national identity of British (or more specifically English) dance.

The dance critic Alastair Macaulay, in an exploration of the 'English' style of ballet recognises how this sense of style has long been associated with the Royal Ballet, in particular with the choreographic style of Sir Frederick Ashton, whose work along with the Petipa/Ivanov 'classics' dominated the repertory of the mid twentieth century Royal Ballet. For Macaulay, the

constraints of English society are products of the class system and have a significant influence on dance in this country:

The English class system - surely more complex and subtle than that of any Western country - is the main reason why English society is so hidebound. Naturally in English dance much of this snobbery attaches to Covent Garden. No wonder the Royal Ballet's signature classic (now illegible) was, for many years, *The Sleeping Beauty*, for it is the most hierarchical of the old ballets, and it focuses on the life of a royal court

Macaulay 1996, 24

Macaulay's discussion suggests the extent to which much British ballet of the mid twentieth century reflected the social milieu of a specific part of society. In particular he quotes from the novelist, Jane Austen, to reveal the physical and social environment of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that shaped the experience of those growing up as white, English and of 'good family' well into the twentieth century. For Macaulay, Austen's novel Emma, along with other novels of the period, describe:

the rural milieu in which, a hundred years later or more, many of us grew up. They catch the English class system, the village mentality, the highly circumscribed social circle we still know in so much English life.

Macaulay, 1996, 23

Aware that this world would not be so familiar to all those born English in the twentieth century, Macaulay is able to illustrate how some of Ashton's ballets, notably Symphonic Variations (1946) and La Fille Mal Gardée, (1960) are rooted in the same locale, one in which lyricism is placed in an almost serene counterpoint with constraint. My own experience corresponds to his analysis; Ashton's dance style with its rich use of épaulement in controlled swirls of

precisely stepped movement appear to me as a familiar structuring of space, reminiscent of the Kent country lanes of my youth; these wound their way between fields enclosed by hedgerows and led to villages in which might be found cottages and at least one large old residence for the 'gentry'.

Ashton was able, in dance terms, to reveal the subtle ways in which his characters (even in 'pure dance' roles) pushed at their ever so English constraints whilst hardly upsetting the gentle rhythm of the world around them. As Macaulay points out, Ashton saw himself as always 'fighting against that English primness in dancers' (Macaulay, 1996 cites Ashton in Vaughan, 1996 [1977]), a theme that will be further explored in relation to sexuality in chapter six. Yet the work Ashton created happily fitted into Royal occasions at the Opera House and some of Ashton's works may run the risk of being interpreted as an 'imagined idyll', 'an adorable Tory fantasy, coloured by a nostalgia for a rural existence sweeter and neater than ever existed' (Macaulay, 1996, 23). For a new generation of black British people growing up in an urban environment, such an idyll might seem as far removed from their experience as the drawing room of Jane Austen's Mansfield Park to those labouring on the West Indies' plantation owned by the true life equivalent of her characters.

A full study of differences in the dance British people enjoy related to their class would be at least as lengthy and complex as Bourdieu's (1979) analysis of French attitudes to visual art and music. In general terms Peter Brinson, writing at the end of the twentieth century from a position of authority within the dance sector, pointed to how notions of 'excellence' were related to the 'high' cultural preferences of the elite that composed the Arts Council and the Board of Covent Garden (Brinson, 1991, 115.) Developing

on from his discussion of dance culture in Britain, it could be argued that ballet as it developed into a national British institution can be viewed as being shaped by the attitudes of those higher up the social ladder and the aspirations of those wanting to join them there. 'Contemporary' dance, as discussed in chapter four, may be thought of as allied to the interests of the intelligentsia through its links with higher education, while dance styles that fit into 'popular culture', whether, pop videos, musicals or ballroom dancing, are thus often perceived as having lower status than the 'high culture' of ballet and 'contemporary' dance. The former group tend to be labelled as 'entertainment' as opposed to 'art' and are more widely popular. For example 26% of respondents to an Arts Council of England survey of attendance had attended a musical in the last year compared to 4% attendance at 'contemporary' dance, 2% at ballet performances and 12% attendance more generally at the full range of dance performance events (Bridgewood, Fenn, Dust, Hutton, Skelton and Skinner, 2003).

However rather than provide evidence of a simple divide between elite and mass culture that equates with divisions on the basis of class, recent discussions of cultural consumption point less to an equation between class divisions and the high:low culture divide and more to a distinction between 'omnivorous' and 'univorous' tendencies and a complex relationship between cultural consumption and social stratification (Chin and Goldthorpe 2006). While income, status and education are differently related to participation in the arts, in general terms lower income, status and education are related to univorous consumption that focuses on film and popular music rather than combining these with enjoyment of live theatre, dance and classical music.

Generalisations regarding 'high' and 'low' culture may mask many anomalies, not least the popularity of full length Tchaikowsky ballets starring 'Barbie' distributed on video (revealing the popularity of children's ballet classes amongst girls). 'Authentic' dance forms from 'non western' cultures are increasingly popular amongst well educated professionals, whilst commercialised versions of 'non western' dance (for example Bollywood dance) attract significant audience numbers. Yet perhaps that the 'high:low' distinction remains pertinent to the omnivorous:univorous divide is revealed by the Arts Council's (adult) attendance figures not featuring hip hop/street dance and ballroom as categories for dance performance even though they are the dance forms most visible on television. Moreover, significantly more people had attended dance performances 'other' than African, ballet, 'contemporary', jazz or South Asian than any one of these suggested categories. The figures for participation revealed a similar picture in that that 23% of (adult) respondents had been 'clubbing' as opposed to 4% taking part in 'contemporary' dance activities and less than 0.5% in ballet classes.

If we accept Macaulay's view that British ballet, in the form of the Royal Ballet as it developed in the mid twentieth century, at that time reflected the attitudes and way of life of a specific group of British people it raises questions about dance in British theatres today. What changes would a national ballet company need to make in order to become more rooted in the lives of a broader section of society? That in terms of ethnicity those identifying themselves as being of Indian, black African and white ethnicities are most likely to attend South Asian dance, African dance and ballet respectively (Bridgewood, Fenn, Dust, Hutton, Skelton and Skinner, 2003, 38)ⁱⁱⁱ suggests there is some progress to be made before companies presenting traditional dance forms engage fully with a wider public.

In addition to companies that present these forms developed by drawing on 'contemporary' dance practices and/or contemporary life experiences, there are organisations working to educate a wider range of people in the traditions of ballet, African and South Asian dance. Both approaches would seem to be in keeping with a pluralistic society which values different cultural traditions while appreciating their development in a postmodern Britain. Indeed a current statement by the Foundation for Community Dance states they are 'developing a model for intercultural dialogue' that recognises:

The diversity of reasons why people participate in dance – some of which are about sustaining traditional cultures based on national, racial and other identities; while others are about making new cultures and creating new identities.

Bartlett, 2007

However, there can seem to be rivalry between these two approaches that occasionally can spill out into quite acrimonious debates^{iv}. To understand this it may be helpful to further contemplate current perceptions of 'difference'.

5.3 Perceptions of 'Difference'

The question of how 'difference' is perceived is no less complex in dance than it is in other parts of public life. For instance, are representations of 'difference' understood as a celebration of diversity or as reinforcing stereotypes by presenting the 'other' in contrast to the norm? It is of interest here to reflect on Dorothea Fischer-Hornung's discussion of a mid twentieth century film of Katherine Dunham teaching a white dancer. Dunham, an African American dancer who was very well educated in anthropology was able to articulate the difficulties in gaining respect as a black performer.

[T]he Negro believes in a certain fallacy the white person has bequeathed him – namely that the Negro is a *natural born* performer and needs no training...

We harbour an appreciation of this rhythm over and above melody....But this appreciation is not based on any physical difference, nor is it psychological; we are socially conditioned by our constant contact with it...In the West Indies, women dance to the drums almost until the hour the child is born – and they nurse it, still dancing. But that does not mean there is no technique. There is. And it is every bit as essential that we train as rigorously as any other group...

Dunham, 1938 in Fischer-Hornung (2001), 92

However while Dunham is likely to have wanted to show that traditional African dance forms were no more 'natural' than western dance traditions, requiring similar degrees of training, the contrast between the white and black dancers in the film unfortunately may, as Fischer-Hornung suggests, be seen demonstrating to many people that 'white girls can't dance'. This would undermine Dunham's project to liberate the black dancing body from 'racialized' "primitivism" and the white body from equally 'racialized' "culturalism" (Fischer-Hornung, 2001, 110) by reinforcing the sense that ethnic differences are 'natural'.

Fischer-Hornung discusses a dance film made in America in the 1950s but are issues for black dancers in London today very different? In conversation with Artist B some themes seemed all too familiar. For instance he reported how when he was training in London in the 1980s his ballet teacher had to break the news to him and other black British dancers that British ballet companies were very unlikely to employ them because of their being black. His immediate passionate response to a question about black dancers in ballet was to emphasise the point Dunham had been making over 50 years ago; that it is the way you are brought up and what you are taught that makes

one form of dance seem more 'natural' than another and 'nothing to do with the colour of your skin' (Artist B, 2006). It seemed that, while recognising changes since the eighties, from his perspective the same prejudices Dunham attempted to counteract still exist in some quarters. However it is his personal experiences of the problems facing black people in Britain in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries that inform his work. In particular, the plight of many black men of his generation, including his friends, seems to undermine any sense of easy optimism: at the time of our discussion he was rehearsing a work which takes as its theme the problems for young black people of growing up in Britain ('No role models, no father figure,... education'). In this context the audience's and dancers' perceptions of their black British identities are an important element of the work (Artist B, November 2005 edited, 2007.)

This perhaps is one of the clearest examples of how perceptions of different ethnicities affect not only how work is understood (in this case that a sense of anger, fear and alienation is specifically related to a black British experience) but how it is created. This artist has a very clear approach towards issues of ethnicity and culture, which is clearly signalled to the audience. The audience are likely to be in no doubt as to the significance of the performers' ethnicity to the work.

In other instances the performer's ethnicity may be less relevant. It may well be that the performance is presented 'or framed' in such a manner as to direct the audience to consider the formal or expressive aspects of the dance and to leave aside considerations of the performers' actual ethnicities with other factors external to the dance. For example, recently in the Royal Ballet School's end of year performance (2005) two black British young men danced in Ashton's La Valse with the combination of lyricism, clarity of

épaulement, and classical elegance that is a feature of this school perfectly matching the dance qualities of their white peers whom they danced alongside. Their ethnicity thus might be set aside as irrelevant to audience's appreciation. Yet since black British dancers are rather a rarity in the parent company, their presence is likely to have been a noticeable feature of this performance for some spectators. An increasing diversity of perceived ethnicity amongst the dancers making up the 'corps' may have been received positively as suggesting a growing acceptance of different ethnicities within the body of British society. Whether this contributed to the appreciation of the performance as art returns us to the questions of aesthetics raised in chapter two.

With regard to the circumstances described above, it would certainly be possible to argue that the dancers' presence contributed to an aesthetic idea of harmony embodied in the dance. From another point of view, by fitting in so well to a style that can be thought of as defining a particular part of 'English' society, their dancing could be interpreted as their assimilation into that society and as such be viewed positively or negatively. For instance the hip hop artist Jonzi D responded to learning ballet at the London School of Contemporary Dance with a sense of having been 'colonized' (2001, 4).

Assimilation into the 'host community' was initially the favoured response to the influx of immigrants from the Commonwealth. However, 'cultural pluralism' has become the official British Establishment approach to the question of different ethnicities, Baroness Helena Kennedy QC, on behalf of the British Council, suggesting to fellow European dignitaries:

We must celebrate our differences and revel in the ways that they bring us together.

Kennedy, 2000

Such ideals, as Kennedy understands, can leave challenges as to how differences can be celebrated in a manner that brings communities together rather than further marking out distinctions that become the focus of conflict. As has been argued by James Donald and Ali Rattansi (1992), a celebration of diversity at a superficial level can mask the fact that there are dominant cultures that have greater power and legitimacy.

The complexities of attitudes to the relationships between different groups are most easily revealed when something goes wrong. The Cantle report (2001) into clashes between Asian youths and the police saw the segregation of specific ethnic groups in terms of their studying, working, socializing and worshipping as being an underlying factor in the polarization between different communities and the ensuing clashes. Here, and in the aftermath of the July 2005 bombings in London, it can be seen how the virtues of cultural pluralism can come into question. Yet, since a return to the ideals of assimilation would be antithetical to the contemporary, liberal concept of individual freedom, the debate about just how Britain manages 'difference' is likely to be lengthy. That the Foundation for Community Dance has recently presented a whole issue of their publication Animated (2007) with a focus on 'intercultural dialogue' suggests the dilemmas facing British society are understood to be echoed in dance and that it is an issue the dance community takes seriously. If, as Trevor Phillips (2005) suggests, Britain is in danger of 'sleepwalking to segregation', should the British aspire to develop dance companies that specialise in specific culturally delineated traditions? If not, especially given how long it takes to train a dancer in a specific tradition, there is a risk of losing the understanding and respect of those traditions. It

could be argued that no tradition is static and that as traditions develop they will in any case reflect the broader culture in which they are situated, but this could be a recipe for doing nothing and allowing the drift that concerns Phillips to continue. Arguments may also be raised in relation to dancers from ethnic minorities being 'assimilated' into dance forms traditionally associated with a culture different to their own being seen as invalidating their own culture, while if new dance forms emerge in the 'melting pot' as dancers bring elements of their own movement culture to different dances, this can appear as a threat to the 'original' traditions.

Unlike those arts that have fixed objects to refer back to, dance by its ephemeral nature is dependent on traditions being handed down. A look at an early photograph featuring the dancers who performed in Petipa and Ivanov's The Nutcracker at the Maryinsky in 1892 (Roslavleva, 1966, facing 128), demonstrates how much changed in ballet between the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Those rounded ladies encumbered in their ballet dresses and headdresses do not look capable of the speed and flexibility demanded of today's svelte, athletic ballerinas. In terms of what dance suggests about society, both what changes and what people feel cannot be changed about their dance can be very interesting. Today's members of a corps de ballet would look very different to their late nineteenth century counterparts but very likely they would look equally similar to one another. In terms of how society shapes perceptions of dance, it may be interesting to reflect on how the perception of differences and similarities affects expectations and appreciation. For instance, the corps de ballet in a traditional work might be expected to all have the same hair style but not necessarily the same colour hair. The dancers would usually be grouped in ways that minimise the visual difference between body sizes and it would be noticed if the smallest and

tallest dancers were placed next to each other. In the age of liberal western democracies this uniformity may be a matter for reflection. Is it appreciated in relation to a historical context? Are current audiences happier to view a greater range of physicalities dancing together as one, seeing dancers who vary visually but dance in the same style with spatial and rhythmic accuracy as a unified entity? How would a corps de ballet be viewed that, in addition to incorporating dancers who are visually different, permitted a range of dynamic phrasing thus allowing dancers to bring more of their own (cultural) identities to the dance? Those companies that have large ensembles who approach the same steps slightly differently tend to be seen as 'contemporary' dance companies even if they draw on ballet vocabulary. At present, Mark Morris, or perhaps William Forsythe present new ensemble works in this way, but many would find it hard to view traditional ballets performed in this manner, perhaps due to a sense of their historic identity.

5.4 Dance and 'New Ethnicities'

If 'difference' is beginning to be a feature of larger companies, artists who have developed skills in dance traditions not usually associated with their cultural and ethnic background seem to be a visible feature of the 'non aligned' sector: Artist B, who identifies himself as black British, creates dance by fusing traditional and modern black dance forms with European dance traditions to make dances often concerned with a current black British experience. He aims for black and white audience members to enjoy his work, but there is an awareness that audiences will respond to his work differently and value it (or not) for reasons that in part are linked to their different cultural backgrounds. For instance he has experience of some black audiences reacting negatively to any dance movement that involves extended lines as 'balletic' and of white audiences failing to see anything but the obvious 'tricks' involved in street or jazz dance. In contrast, the dancer of 'Hispanic' ethnicity, brought up in the Bronx, draws on neither 'Latin' dance nor hip hop, but on 'pure movement' traditions most often associated with middle class, educated white Americans and Europeans. However, he has an awareness of how his cultural background and sense of ethnicity informed his early dance experiences:

We were sent to ballet classes and I just enjoyed it ...
But I remember when I watched ballet on television as a child it was just too foreign to me. It was a very white culture - It's beautiful and I just could never relate to it. For me, I'm always drawn to things that are really ground related. So that could have something to do with maybe the background of being part of you know this Indian...

I was really into going disco dancing 'cause I grew up in the Bronxthen coming into dance (training)
Graham was the first thing I did and it wasn't because I had a choice really it was just I had looked it up in the telephone book and it was the only name I had heard of so that's where I ended up. It was very white, very rich. It was just really a whole different thing. But once

I got into the studio the floor works were so grounding,
very beautiful, very inspiring...

Artist D, 2003

The South Londoner of African Caribbean ethnicity performs Egyptian dance because it is a dance form that attracted her. However she recognises that this may be partially linked to her cultural background:

I just liked the music. There was something I was immediately drawn to. Talking to other people - like a friend of mine who is an older Caribbean woman - she is saying there are so many similarities with the African and Caribbean - in the actual technique. I don't think it is something that has been emphasised...

Anderson, 2003

Artists like these seem to view the traditions they draw on in creating dance as a matter of individual preference rather than conforming to preconceived ideas about what dance form someone from their cultural background should dance. However there is also an awareness of how their cultural background shapes those choices. Perhaps all three artists have a sense of creating their dance identity that is linked to their sense of self as an individual. If dance is thought of as embodying ways of being, have they actively chosen ways of dancing and being that suit them? Although one of them admits to having wanted to explore something different to what was familiar, all three were concerned with what suited their body and their way of moving. Their dancing of their own choreography might thus be seen as embodying their sense of self and agency understood not in terms of a contrast to a seemingly homogenous cultural group (as may be the case with their counterparts in well established companies) but in the context of the cultural diversity that is found in contemporary urban cities.

This approach might be viewed as compatible with Stuart Hall's concept of 'new ethnicities' (Hall 1996 [1989]) which emphasises the differences

contained within ethnic groups and allows for elements of cultural 'hybridization'. It is a concept which looks forward to an eventual weakening of boundaries between ethnic groups as multiple differences in relation to culture, class, gender and sexuality bring about a whole range of potential self-definitions. Such a viewpoint is closely related to issues of culture and ethnicity in postmodern, postcolonial theory. However in these approaches there may be more emphasis on active resistance to racism and a proactive attitude to creating opportunities for the voices of minorities to be heard. Watching the work of Artist B, the most radical amongst the artists I talked to in terms of voicing concerns relating to his experience of ethnicity, brought home the relevance of some of the concerns of post colonial theory. For instance Paul Gilroy (1987) suggests how a group's perception of its own 'race' is socially and politically constructed in response to racism. Yet sitting alongside a fellow dance professional of African British ethnicity, I recognised both of us were equally distanced from the experiences of inner city black youths by class, education, gender and age. Artist B himself, while starting from a concern with experiences of black British youths, is aware that the issues he raises could also be viewed in relation to different ethnicities and even gender and is contemplating surprising his audience in the future by recasting the work. Stuart Hall's concept of 'new ethnicities' perhaps best represents the complexities of issues of identities with which dance artists currently grapple.

'Contemporary' dance companies, due to their tradition of innovation, are the most likely to be influenced by newer ideas. In a survey of their web sites in 2005, it was interesting to see the number of dancers who in their appearance seemed to reflect the idea of 'new ethnicities': the number of dancers taking on aspects of 'other' identities was evident alongside a

number of dancers who, within the context of current sensitivities, would be considered as being of 'mixed ethnicity'^{vi}. In terms of audiences, an Arts Council survey revealed that over a third of dance 'attenders' defining themselves as being of 'mixed ethnicity' attend 'contemporary' dance in contrast to a quarter of the white and 14% of Asian audiences for dance (Arts Council of England, 2003). The Arts Council suggest that the comparative youth of the 'mixed ethnicity' group may account for some but not all differences in patterns of participation. Age has been shown to be a factor in attitudes to ethnicity amongst ethnic minority groups. More precisely, there are different attitudes to their ethnicity amongst those who originally came as immigrants to Britain and their British born offspring (Modood, Beishan and Virdee, 1994). Generally more hybrid approaches are a feature of the younger generations (not discounting the significance of those who seek a culturally distinct approach). It is thus likely that age and ethnicity are factors behind the proportionately high attendance of those defining themselves as being of 'mixed ethnicity' at 'contemporary' dance performances.

With its emphasis on individual expression and the creation of new works by young choreographers, it may be that 'contemporary' dance offers the potential to articulate ways of being in keeping with the concept of 'new ethnicities' in contrast to dance forms with older traditions. Moreover fusions of forms, particularly of less established traditions with 'contemporary' dance, seem popular. For instance a number of companies identify themselves as contemporary Asian or contemporary African. While, at Morley College where I worked until September 2005 in South London, offering pre vocational or leisure courses, amongst the students new to dance were a small but identifiable group of more experienced, usually white, 'contemporary' dancers exploring kathak, Egyptian or African-Caribbean dance and street dancers,

often black, turning up in ballet classes. While dance may not always serve intercultural dialogue, an interest in breaking down the boundaries between cultural forms exists beyond the demands of the Arts Council.

5.5 Diversity and Questions of Value

The interest in exploring a range of dance is sometimes linked to a challenge to the perceived status quo in terms of what forms are valued more highly: discussions with street dance students (Morley College, 2004) revealed a concern to develop ways of dancing that value the traditions of a whole range of dance practices. Amongst this group there was a distrust of a hierarchy of values that would place breakin' below ballet or 'contemporary' and an openness to dancers drawing on different dance traditions to create a style that works for them. For example, since part of the street dance tradition has become the incorporation of movements from other contexts to develop your own individual style, street dancers seem particularly open to borrowing movements from other genres as long as they can incorporate them on their terms. These dance values seem to parallel a broader concern for equality. This is not to say however that 'anything goes'. With a tradition of street dance battles and competitions, judgments are certainly made that decide one dance/dancer is better than another. These judgements are as hotly debated as any other qualitative assessments in western dance and seem to reflect the same concerns with issues of value as found in other dance forms. In a project to work with a street dance teacher (Bunbury, 2006) to identify clear outcomes for assessing achievement in street dance, it became apparent that the same approach to quantifying standards could be applied to this dance form as are used for other western dance forms in spite of its sometimes seeming to be positioned in opposition to more mainstream, western dance genres. The need for bodily control and coordination, skills in

virtuosic movements, precision in space and time (particularly in unison sequences) were all similar to other dance techniques. Moreover, the need for dancers to be able to make creative choices and 'freestyle' led to similar outcomes to those used to assess improvisation in 'contemporary' dance. As with much dance in Britain, there seems to be a tension between the need for groups to dance in unison as a cohesive unit and for dancers to develop a sense of individual 'style'.

Street dancers may challenge traditional dance hierarchies, but the same cultural pressures can be seen affecting street dance as affect other dance forms. Amongst the practitioners in London there is the same perceived divide between those who make commercial work and those who make work (usually fused with other dance/performance genres) for more artistic presentation. There is a similar debate about the worth of showy, virtuosic moves and the presence of a third group who in keeping their dance allied to its roots in street culture are in part linked to the community dance ethos. This last group however have a zeal for upholding their values and style which are very different to much of the community dance movement that largely developed out of explorations in 'contemporary' dance (Scott Barrett, 2007, 16)^{vii}. What distinguishes street dance from other western theatre forms, and relates to its roots in urban youth culture, are certain stylistic features. These in part draw on what the young people call 'attitude' but can be identified in terms of movement analysis as emphasis on strong, direct, bound movements which vary in terms of speed. There is rarely the spatial projection to the extent found in other western dance forms although the focus can be very direct and body design can be extremely important. In short the dancers tend to confront space rather than assume dominance over it. Complex articulations of the upper body together with grounded

movements found in street dance reveal the African dance influences that fed through early jazz dancers into “breakin” and “poppin”. Stylistically street dance seems to reflect a very different way of being to dance forms more traditionally presented in major western dance venues. However, as the project to accredit it revealed, it shares some values and concerns common to (western) theatre dance more generally. Since audiences are interested in a broader range of dance than ballet and ‘contemporary’, it is not surprising that this dance form is crossing over into the established dance sector as demonstrated by a whole weekend at Sadler’s Wells in summer 2004 that is becoming a popular annual event.

A factor that may still militate against dance forms with roots in ‘non western’ cultures being valued as art is the historic perception of culture. In particular, in relation to dance, primitivist assumptions have led to the ‘other’ being seen as a source of unbridled sexuality. For example, in Edward Said’s ground breaking work of the 1970’s, Orientalism, in which he investigated the West’s view of the Orient, he recognised:

The Orient seems still to suggest not only fecundity but sexual promise (and threat), untiring sensuality, unlimited desire, deep generative energies...

Said, 1995[1978],188

While Said was careful to put an explanation of this sexual fascination beyond the reach of his study, he suggested that to the Romantics the Orient was a place for the exploration of a kind of sexual experience different to that

available in a Europe where sex had become embroiled in a 'web of legal, moral, even political and economic obligations' (Said, 1995 [1978], 190). However, Said claims this sexual exploration became, in time, a standard commodity and while he relates this to popular literature it surely also relates to the popularity of Oriental themes in nineteenth and twentieth century dance on which much of the success of both the Diaghilev Ballet and Denishawn was based. The issues this raises for dance is illustrated by Said's hardly mentioning dance save to describe, almost in passing, the profession of the prostitute Flaubert took up with on his travels in Egypt.

If for the European Romantics the Orient, and particularly Egypt, was the site for reaction against the conventions of the West, twentieth century Harlem may have provided a similar opportunity for white counter cultural experimentation in America. In a discussion of dance in Harlem in the 1920s, Wendy Perron quotes Nathan Huggins' discussion of what white visitors to Harlem were seeking:

Harlem was a means of soft rebellion... The Negro as their subversive agent - his music, manners and speech... The fantasy of Negro sexuality is fed by deep springs in the white psyche... Negroes were the essential self one somehow lost on the way to civility, ghosts of one's primal nature whose very nearness could spark electric race-memory of pure sensation untouched by self consciousness and doubt.

Huggins [1973] in Perron, 2001, 24

The issue of sexuality within dance will be explored in more depth in the next chapter. In terms of how dance is valued, if in the past the dances of 'others' were interpreted by white audiences as reflective of an uninhibited sexuality, however positively this might have been viewed, it leaves a heritage of perception that may make it more difficult for some western audiences to

view 'non western' dance as the product of structured, learned, movement forms and thus respect them as art.

It is interesting to note that the popularity of what are perceived as predominantly black or Oriental dance forms (such as street and Egyptian dance) may be associated with the breakdown in the boundaries between high and low culture. While theatres such as Sadler's Wells move to include street dance, is there a sense that it is perceived by some as placed within a hierarchy that would still view greater artistic value in more traditional western dance forms? If the view of art that persists within cities such as London draws on aesthetic ideals embedded within western culture, such a hierarchy of art values may be unlikely to change unless there is a change in aesthetics.

5.6 Global Perspectives

One factor that may perhaps be influencing a shift in artistic values is the global perspective that seemed to influence the majority of the artists I talked to. Although it was not an issue I had initially thought to raise through questions, in discussing their work four out of six dancers in the first interviews specifically alluded to differences and similarities between trends in their dance field here and in other countries. This seemed especially marked amongst the two drawing on 'non western' dance traditions. For instance, Anderson was interested in how dance in Egypt had assimilated Hollywood versions of Egyptian dance and how the development of the cabaret style in the salons of the 1920s fused Egyptian dance with a more western sense of 'theatricality'. The 'Modern Cairo Style', she felt, had incorporated balletic elements into the dance. Yet in contrast to this absorption of western theatricality into Egyptian dance as performed in Egypt,

Anderson was conscious of how local Egyptian audiences viewed some European based performers as lacking expressive elements that, she felt, were developed through an immersion in Egyptian culture. Anderson was also aware of the attempts some European based performers have made to present their dance in a manner fitting in with traditions in 'artistic' (western) theatre dance. This is most easily seen in relation to costuming, where dancers based in Egypt adopted the Hollywood invention of the two piece costume^{viii}, while some contemporary European based performers eschew not only the bare midriff but also the accompanying scarves and ornamentation. This dancer was also interested in the links between Egyptian and other African dance forms, in particular why an emphasis is usually placed on Egyptian dance's 'oriental' context^{ix}.

For Sushma Mehta, visits to India and continued connections with dancers from India are an important part of her continued professional development alongside studies in Britain. An interesting perspective on the complexities of globalisation is seen in how this artist, working in traditional kathak dance, chose as a recent collaborator an Indian based dance artist who has trained in 'contemporary' dance.

The street dancers I talked to seemed to view their dance as linked to an urban youth culture that, while part of a global phenomenon, also draws on culture and dance traditions specific to a locality. Perhaps in contrast to the British adaptation of jazz into a dance syllabus suited to local dancing schools, street dance, developing in the context of postmodernity, is promoted through a near global network that has access to the internet to view the latest 'moves'. When questioned about the potential for cultural dominance by America and MTV my students looked at me quizzically

pointing out the best street dancers were Korean. In the mainstream, street dance may be almost synonymous with American hip hop, but London based dancers are aware of British traditions and the strengths of dancers around the world in a way in which young jazz dancers in the 1970s could not have imagined.

The effect of globalisation on British identities has been documented by the sociologist Andrew Pilkington. He finds that some British people have felt their national identity to be threatened by both the growing power of the European Union and the strengthening of the identities of ethnic minorities. Pilkington (2002) argues that the British identity is a social construct which did not exist before the Act of Union (1707) and was largely dependent on defining itself in contrast to others, most notably Catholics and the French. He argues that it is possible for British identity to change to meet the challenge of globalization by embracing multiple identities.

For those artists who define themselves as black British there is a sense in which their dance can refer to a pan African experience as well as to a contemporary British one. Thomas F. DeFrantz, drawing on the works of Paul Gilroy, suggests how Black dancers performing in the context of the western theatre can draw support from their sense of belonging to the African diaspora. The circle that Paul Gilroy sees as something that 'protects and permits' Black dance in a social context is extended through space and time to the theatrical context.

But what of our concert dancer, already removed from the realm of the social by virtue of her interest in focused aesthetic principles adopted from Western ideas? I offer she might, by necessity, align herself with the African diaspora. Here, she will take comfort in

the multitudes similarly disenfranchised and deposited in the New and Old Worlds without recourse to a 'real' homeland. The African diaspora is a utopia... It is a tool for survival. The diaspora closes the circle for the dance across time and space. Through it, we black dancers allow ourselves to collaborate whether we understand each other or not

De Frantz, 2000, 13-14

What De Frantz writes of African American dancers can also be related to those viewing themselves as black British. Pilkington also found that a resistance to multiple identities can be found amongst ethnic minorities as well as amongst white 'little Englanders'. For some communities sensing a lack of acceptance amongst white British people strengthens their sense of ethnic identity. Thus while some people may have a sense of multiple identities in a global context, others have a sense of singular ethnic identity linked to a perceived community that may be dispersed around the world. These people thus may also be resistant to 'new hybrid identities' (or in Hall's terms 'new ethnicities') being wary of their culture mixing with others. It is likely then that artists who forge new dance identities that explore their relationship both to Britain and the African diaspora are likely not only to suffer the prejudice of the 'little Englanders' but hostility from those who would keep their cultural traditions separate.

In dance terms the instances of seeming resentment between those maintaining distinct dance traditions and those developing fusions of dance forms may well reflect these broader cultural concerns. An important factor here may be the result of perceived funding preferences for one or other approach. One aspect to such tensions is related to questions of aesthetics. In discussions with Anderson and Mehta (the latter prior to starting the research), the problem of presenting 'non

western' dance in western theatres revealed the differences in aesthetic viewpoints. To be accepted as art within western aesthetics places expectations that may fit oddly with some aspects of dance traditions originating in Asia or Africa. South Asian or African dance artists wanting funding may emphasise the creative developments they are making to their dance form in relation to how creativity is understood in (western) 'contemporary' dance. Where such approaches are more successful, in terms of gaining the seal of Arts Council approval, than those working more within the boundaries of their traditions, it could seem as if integration is a one way process. Further, as will be explored in the next chapter, different cultural attitudes to sexuality and its relationship to art are still an issue that artists confront. Enjoyment of 'non western' dance in a global context can at times be linked to the collapsing of (western) boundaries between art and entertainment but this may be to the detriment of a western appreciation of different artistic values.

5.7 Diversity, Individualism and Agency

Whether working in 'contemporary', jazz, ballet, Egyptian dance, hip hop or fusions of any of these, what marks out the artists contributing to this research is the element of individuality in approach to dance, informed by knowledge of existing traditions and common practices. This individualism is an important element of contemporary western culture and thus of (western) theatre dance heritage. While undeniably reflecting a 'great men' (and women) approach to dance history, the fascination with dance artists as individuals also reflects the communicative potential of dance within western culture. The examples of artists who are developing individual choreographic styles by choosing to draw on dance traditions associated with a culture different to their background appear to me as some kind of resistance to pressures to fit into the expectations of others that dates back to Romanticism. However, the question of what is a matter of individual choice is complex.

Choice can be something of an illusion and in relation to cultural diversity can seem rather superficial. In dance terms choice might be equivalent to the nineteenth century practice of changing the design on the bodice of the tutu to indicate a different 'exotic' location for a ballet. However, for a dancer to learn the basic stance and style of a different movement tradition takes hours. To become anything like proficient in it takes a number of years. So for those who become skilled in more than one culture's dance tradition, or who decide to learn to dance in a form not most easily available to them, the level of personal investment is far more than having a new hair style or buying a cook book. To move in ways different to those instilled by previous immersion in movement training is difficult as the body may literally have grown into a

desired shape. For instance in ballet the body is 're-educated' (Lawson 1975) from a young age, and from my own experience of ballet training my 'lengthened' straighter spine has yet to regain its more natural curves in spite of my attempts to re-programme my muscular habits first in Graham-based and later in releasing technique classes. This makes it difficult to achieve the articulation of the spine demanded in much African–Caribbean dance.

In late capitalist society, in which the marketability of the body-as-project is well documented (and will be explored in chapter seven), the motivation to learn a different dance form can be commercially driven. However, to engage fully with different ways of being through dance may be viewed as a resistance to those who would insist on the death of the individual in late capitalist society as much as to those who would uphold traditional boundaries between different communities of people. Dancers who cross cultural boundaries can be seen as revealing the potentiality of humans both to embody different ways of being and perhaps to assert an element of individual agency.

While artists may attempt to embody a sense of agency and individual identity not bound by cultural conventions, audiences may receive their work in ways that can limit this sense of agency. Observing the progression of the development of Artist B, I have been struck by how often a 'fun' jazz orientated dance work was selected by theatre programmers who seemed wary of his more serious work exploring aspects of black British experience. This may have been because the former was a well polished piece or simply because programmers find fun pieces easier to sell than serious ones. (Ironically the fun work can lead to his being taken less seriously by those writing on black dance.) However it did strike me that perhaps programmers

felt some audiences would feel more comfortable with an image of young black people showing off their physical prowess in a light hearted way than their confronting serious issues. The artist himself is adamant that 'the only pigeon-hole is if I pigeon-hole myself' (Artist B, 2006). His recent serious work is now gaining performance opportunities although, in addition to his determination, this may in part reflect a shift in attitudes since violence amongst young people has become the focus of concern in the media.

From the audience's perspective, unless a strict formalist aesthetic is adhered to, there has always been a question as to how to view the significance of the choices choreographers and directors make in terms of the dancers they cast in (western) theatre dance performances. Audiences may decide to 'read' this aspect of a dance performance in relation to how the performance is presented or 'framed': in a piece of dance theatre the ethnicity of the performers may be an integral feature of what is being presented; in a ballet in which members of the corps de ballet are all dressed and move the same, or in a contemporary dance work where the focus is on the movement's spatial and dynamic forms, what may be prioritised are the 'formal' qualities of the work. Returning to Copeland's updated formalism it may be that the concept of aesthetic distance can be useful:

The post structuralists no doubt would tell us that all we ever see is what we have been conditioned to see, what the language we speak and the culture we inhabit will permit us to see. But the function (or one possible function) of formalism is to draw us out of ourselves, to encourage us to transcend responses that are habitual or merely conditioned.

Copeland, 1990, 8

Distancing aesthetic appreciation from more day to day concerns with matters of ethnicity may allow audiences to set aside preconceptions or even prejudices that inhibit their ability to appreciate the qualities of a dance performance. However, as in the example of the Royal Ballet School's (2005) performance of La Valse, given the current state of concern in relation to 'difference', aesthetic enjoyment of dance may be positively affected if experience of such difficulties is recognised. Against a context in which formal harmony has often depended on the use of dancers of similar physical appearance, the presentation of physical 'difference' in a harmonious form may be felt to embody the aesthetic idea of social harmony in a diverse society. Returning to the discussion of aesthetics in chapter two this is not to say this is the 'true meaning' of the performance. Nor in the reverse case should we insist that a dance that only uses dancers who look the same embodies the ideal of 'ethnic purity'. Dance as an art is too complex to be translated so literally. Yet at a time in the development of British culture when perceived differences between groups defined in terms of ethnicity are the sources of many tensions, for audiences and artists alike, to reflect on these issues may inform the understanding of dance.

Within the context of semiotic approaches to dance as 'read', it may be helpful to re-consider the concept of 'framing' in relationship to the power

dynamic at play between producers, artists and audiences. In terms of appreciation it is important to reflect on how the phenomenological experience of the dance is affected by an embodied position within culture as lived. Audiences may recognise that dancers such as Artist B are able to draw on more than one way of being, if as audience members they are willing to engage fully with his dancing. To return to the question of how 'difference' is perceived in dance, how it is answered may depend on the extent to which artists and their audiences are able to exercise personal agency in their approach to cultural norms.

Notes to Chapter Five

- ⁱ From their viewpoint they are competing internationally against companies some of which fare much better in terms of state subsidy.
- ⁱⁱ The figures analysed are for 2005/6. For instance how much of the Royal Opera House's global figure of over 24 million supports ballet rather than opera affects the statistics, as does the inclusion of umbrella organisations as some tend to promote a particular form (e.g Dance Umbrella, Independance, Akademi) .
- ⁱⁱⁱ Discussion of these findings in relation to audiences for Shobana Jeyasingh revealed further complexities as her audience is largely white, but it is unclear whether those responding to the questionnaire would have identified her work as South Asian dance or 'contemporary'.
- ^{iv} In a discussion of works in progress at Morley College, December 2005, it seemed that a group presenting traditional African Dance felt defensive of their position in relation to 'contemporary' African dance.
- ^v In 2007 the look that emphasised cultural fusion in the hair fashions for corn rows for white dancers and bleached hair on Black dancers seems to have given way to more subtle manifestations of individual approaches to the cross cultural in fashion.
- ^{vi} What tends to be recognised by this term are combinations of white European and African/African Caribbean or white European and Asian although the actual permutations are endless and, working in South London, I have found the term is increasingly a source of annoyance to the young adults it is supposed to describe.
- ^{vii} That the former relates to a predominantly black urban culture and the latter to a predominantly white, liberal educated one makes for some complex interactions.
- ^{viii} Something of the complexities of Egyptians' own attitudes to sexuality in dance is suggested by Judith Lynne Hannah (1988, 63) who states the two piece was banned by Nasser in 1963 along with movements carrying sexual implications but that these strictures were then relaxed in 1966.
- ^{ix} Given the popularity of 'Orientalism' in early twentieth century western theatre dance and the current ethnicity of our major ballet companies there does seem to be a sense in which dance forms and dancers perceived as 'Eastern' have been more readily assimilated into western theatre dance than those perceived as black.

6

Dualism and Dance: Desire and Distance

6.0 Introduction

In a discussion in chapter four of how the artists I interviewed approached their work, I drew on the argument of the sociologist Charles Varela that the concept of the 'lived body' can be useful as a 'sensitising strategy' in the struggle to avoid the problem of dualist approaches to human behaviour in the social sciences. For Varela this concept, derived from phenomenological approaches to subjective bodily experience, is not a 'conceptual solution' since it fails to account for 'the personal enactment of a semiotic system of action-signs' (Varela, 1997, 216-218). This then raises issues in relation to a parallel interest amongst some dance artists to develop 'embodied sensitivity' in performance: the subtle skills with which dancers demonstrate high levels of awareness of their movements and their ability to respond intuitively 'in the moment' can be understood as suggesting a bodily way of being that challenges the instrumental attitude to the body that is so often associated with dualism. However, Varela's critique of the concept of the 'lived body' suggests such dancers may still not have completely resolved the body:mind problem.

Returning to the relationship between dance and concepts of the 'body' (lived or not), in this chapter I will explore what is perceived as the legacy of 'Cartesian dualism' to provide a context to current approaches to the body/embodiment in dance. The contemplation of body as distinct to the mind will be discussed in relation to a religious tradition that sets 'flesh' in opposition to soul and, more generally, furthering the discussion of Bourdieu

in chapter three, as part of the 'habitus' that shapes 'high' culture. This will lead to a discussion of how attitudes to the body as flesh are interrelated with issues of sexuality and gender that in themselves have influenced (western) theatrical dance.

This exploration is both a response to themes that have emerged from discussions with artists and also an attempt to provide a context for further reflection on their current dance practices. However, the diversity of these London based artists, which was the subject of chapter five, brings into consideration that it is not only the legacy of western attitudes that affects dance in Britain. Further, the artists' accounts illustrate the complexities of the relationships among, gender, class, sexuality, ethnicity, age and ability that may inform understanding of what is embodied in their dance.

6.1 Body:Mind Problems

The seventeenth century philosopher, René Descartes, is often credited with conceptualising the mind as distinct from the material body with which it is somehow, causally, related. This led to the philosophical problem of how this relationship can be explained logically that is popularly referred to as the 'body:mind problem'. It has been argued that this conception of Descartes' theories is erroneous and that his work is better understood as an attempt to 'explain the existence of consciousness and its relationship to the material world' (Pakes, 2006). Irrespective of the assessment of his work in philosophical terms, Descartes' writings reflect that in the seventeenth century, in contrast to a previous reliance on existing religious dogma, there was an important shift towards emphasising the human capacity for self reflection and abstract thought. Writing at a time when the Church had considerable power, Descartes' care, in developing his 'method', not to offend

the Inquisition is evident in an oblique reference at the beginning of the 'Sixth Discourse' to the trial of Galileo¹. Yet in his determination to test the rational basis of knowledge, Descartes can be seen as outlining a way of thinking that 'opened the doors to the development of modern science' (Sutcliffe, 1968, 21). Out of his famous 'Cogito ergo sum', Descartes deduced (albeit on his terms that had 'proved' the existence of God) 'we should never let ourselves be persuaded except on the evidence of our reason' (Descartes, 1968 [1637], 59). Since for Descartes human reason was a God given attribute, recourse to it in his attempt to 'avoid precipitancy and prejudice' (Descartes, 1968 [1637], 41) deflected the potentially heretical significance of a reliance on human intellect. His writings, however, were still treated with suspicion by the Catholic Church.

For the purposes of exploring attitudes to the body in relation to dance, it is important to contemplate changes in the experience of embodied existence that parallel this conceptual shift. From a sociological perspective, the body in modern western society may be viewed as the site of control. As I explored in chapter three, the control of the body in rational time and space that Foucault described in relation to changes in social control in the transition from Medieval to Modern society can still be experienced as important to the practice of bodily control in ballet. Surveillance as a technique of control in modernity, exemplified by Foucault in the concept of the panoptican prison, and the sense of how the ever watchful eye controlling behaviour becomes internalised into a constant self monitoring in relation to acceptable norms of behaviour, may also be related to issues of control of the body in 'contemporary' dance training (Smith, 1998). In reading the work not only of Michel Foucault, but also the earlier sociology of Norbert Elias at first hand, I was struck by how their references to primary sources illustrated the effects

the social changes they analysed must have had on people's experiences of their embodiment. Foucault commences Discipline and Punish with first hand accounts of a public torture and execution in which the condemned man was subjected to (amongst other horrors), tearing of the flesh, boiling oil, and quartering before the parts of his body were burned. Foucault thus draws attention to the extreme physical violence involved in very public punishments contrasting this with the increasing regulation of behaviour within the formal institutions of school, army and prison that developed from the end of the eighteenth century. Elias (1978) [1939], draws on early writings on good manners which demonstrate how the control of personal behaviour in every day communal settings changed. He draws attention to a history of etiquette in relation to eating, defecating, passing wind, nudity, and sleeping in near proximity to others. In general terms, as Europe moved further away from the Middle Ages, restrictions on behaviour that revealed human corporeality increased. Moreover, a shared understanding of what behaviour was to be hidden also developed so that early texts openly discuss the need to moderate certain behaviour that later ones would find too crude to mention.

Bodily self control and the detachment, in public life, from bodily functions and their products, the cessation of public displays of a criminal's or enemy's innards and the claim to personal space make for a very different experience of embodiment today to that conjured up by Foucault and Elias of those living before eighteenth century 'enlightenment'. If these writers provide a fair perspective on the past, one can envisage that for Descartes, writing in the mid seventeenth century, there would have been many reminders of the fragile, physical reality of the body. Apart from the more visceral aspects of day to day living, Descartes' travels around Europe and his attempts to be a

soldier meant that as a young man he would have gained wide experience of life beyond the confines of the Jesuit school he attended. Descartes had reason enough to be aware of the fragility of fleshly existence and, while he had little faith in the methods of the doctors of his age, his discourses reveal a profound interest in physiology and the future potential of medicine to cure illness (Descartes, 1967 [1637], 79).

The effort of thinking his way out of the accepted 'truths' of his time by, what he described as, becoming accustomed to 'detach my mind from the senses' (Descartes, 'Fourth Meditation' 1967 [1637], 132), permeates The Meditations. Descartes recognised the difficulties in everyday life where 'the necessities of action often oblige us to make a decision before we have had the leisure to examine things so carefully' (Descartes, 'Sixth Meditation', 1967 [1641] 169). However, having succeeded in contemplating the distinction in terms of matter between immaterial mind and the material body, the problem for Descartes was the relationship between them. If, as he believed, the relationship was causal, then how did the immaterial mind and physical body interact? While he was adamant about the material distinction between body and mind he admitted:

I am not only lodged in my body, like a pilot in his ship,
but, besides that I am joined to it very closely and
indeed so compounded and intermingled with my
body, that I form, as it were, a single whole with it.

Descartes, 'Sixth Meditation', 1967 [1641], 159

The logical basis for this interrelationship has been a question that has bedevilled Modern Philosophyⁱⁱ. While the idea that mental states causally interact with physical states appeals to common sense, logical arguments

have been difficult to sustain. It is, however, important to recognise that in spite of philosophical critiques, the legacy of the 'Cartesian' shift to popular attitudes to the relationship of mind and body is such that it still plays a considerable part in shaping attitudes to the body in dance. In contemporary western society at a time when dualism is no longer given depth by a belief in god given intuitions, and where people have become adept at hiding the physical reality of their embodiment, efforts to distinguish consciousness can be viewed as having exaggerated the separateness of mind and body. For instance, while Descartes was all too aware of how pain reminded him of the 'mingling of mind and body' (Descartes Sixth Meditation 1967 [1641] 159), Foucault (1979) [1975] points to the change in ethical attitudes that lie behind contemporary (American) forms of capital punishment: from the seventeenth century Christian point of view, being deprived of the chance to suffer and repent put the immortal soul at risk; in the age of the anaesthetic and analgesic, in a most extreme manifestation of conscious experience being set at a distance from the body, while a prisoner may be deprived of life s/he is prevented from feeling what is happening to her/him. Something of the seventeenth century viewpoint may be seen as lingering on in the 'if it hurts its good' dance training regimes that lasted well into the twentieth century. Today the emphasis is on injury prevention and pain management. However, with proportionately high numbers of dancers struggling with injury (Laws, 2004)ⁱⁱⁱ, it is not surprising that some dancers are challenging what is seen as an underlying dualism that informs instrumental or mechanistic attitudes to a body 'as a thing to be whipped, honed, and moulded into shape' (Fraleigh, 1987, 11).

As dance academic, Anna Pakes, points out, in philosophical circles theoretical dualism has been on the wane since the 1950s. According to

Pakes (2006) the 'current orthodoxy' amongst contemporary philosophers is 'physicalist'. That is to say consciousness, rather than viewed as an immaterial entity that interacts with the physical body, is reduced to its physical base. This physicalist alternative is shown by Pakes to be problematic for dance since the laws of physics allow only for physical occurrences to cause other physical effects. Dancers' actions thus become the result of physiological or neurological occurrences. Any non physical, mental experience involved in such actions cannot logically be allowed to have any causal influence. Reducing consciousness to its physical base risks making the lived experience of dance a by product of neural functions. In particular 'qualia' (or the felt experience of perceptions) become a side show (epiphenomena) having no causal impact on the actions of the dancer. Yet the artists I talked to certainly seem to believe felt experience has a very definite effect on how they dance. Further the underlying determinism of the physicalist perspective strikes at the heart of the significance of the sense of agency that seems important to these artists. An emphasis on physicalism may thus not be out of keeping with an attitude to the performer as a material commodity subsumed into the discourse of capitalism, a subject that is discussed in the next chapter.

In the light of the problems with both dualism and physicalism that Pakes discusses, it is not surprising that (as was discussed in chapter two) some dancers have tended instead to explore phenomenology as an alternative conceptual approach to mind:body. The focus on lived experience and embodied engagement with the world provides a means to avoid both the dualist framework, in which the body becomes the object of the mind (and particularly of the minds of others), and the physicalist one, which minimises the importance of sentient experience. At a theoretical level, Merleau-Ponty's

claim that cause and effect do not govern the psychological realm allows for an account of human agency understood in relation to reasons which would thus allow for qualia to be significant. Unashamedly 'unfinished' in its task 'to reveal the mystery of the world and reason' (Merleau-Ponty 2002[1945] xxiv) phenomenology's potential for dance has been to uncover how assumptions about the relationship between consciousness and the world underpin the experience of self and other.

6.2 Soul: Flesh Perspectives

In order to understand the perceived influence of dualism to (western) theatre dance it is useful to draw further on an historical perspective. According to Foucault (1975), prior to the drawing up of modern penal codes in the eighteenth century, the destruction of the body of the condemned was made into a spectacle to demonstrate the power of the sovereign. Up until the later part of the seventeenth century in France, the Sovereign himself could be seen at the centre of a different kind of spectacle, the Ballet de Cour in which the power and glory of the monarch and his kingdom were displayed. These spectacles often glorified his unique position as ruler by divine right, a position sanctified by the church. Most famously Louis XIV, who loved to dance, presented himself as Le Roi Soleil. Louis XIV retired from dancing himself in 1669 and with the instigation of L' Académie Royale de Musique (later L'Opéra), dance performance gradually made the transition from courtly to professional activity. Whilst the history of ballet demonstrates that performances still could, and would, continue to be used to make visible the power and resources of the state, power would no longer be seen as simply invested in the actual people performing. Rather it would be inferred in the ability of the state to deploy its subjects in skilfully arranged and performed displays. With the transition to the professional stage, the status of those

dancing would become more precarious and more susceptible to the opinions of others and particularly to those of the church, the attitudes of which to the theatre have been generally acknowledged as ambiguous.

But what they [the Church] could in all faith damn on one plane of consciousness, they absorbed, for future use, on another.

Kirstein, 1969 [1935] 59

...in the endeavour of the Church to transmute the popular love of theatrical spectacle into something higher... the Church itself must, throughout the Dark Ages, have come at times to seem curiously sympathetic towards the very thing it was at times impelled to condemn.

Perugini, 1935, 48

In facing first the legacy of Roman entertainments and later the secularisation of liturgical drama, the Church, while happy to make use of theatrical elements to propagate its own message through the theatre of its rituals and later miracle plays, would condemn those events that encouraged secular entertainment for its own sake.

In addition to the Church's general suspicion of entertainment, the inescapably physical aspects of dance made it particularly open to censure. This point has been made by the dance anthropologist, Judith Lynne Hanna. While she quotes the bible to show there have been Christian approaches to the body as 'temple of the Holy Spirit within' and that recognise the church as the body of Christ, she concludes that 'the theological and philosophical traditions of Christendom devalued the body, some emotions and dancing' (Hanna, 1983, 32). Certainly biblical extracts reveal a view of the body as the source of sin that could corrupt the soul.

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body that ye
should obey it in the lust thereof.

Romans 6, Verse 12

The dance writer Lincoln Kirstein came to similar conclusions revealing the Church's attitude to dance as having been one of suspicion and inconsistency: according to Kirstein (1969) [1935], in the early development of the Church, the gnostic gospel of 160 AD portrayed Christ as a dancer but the gnostic gospels were suppressed in the second century AD and by 744 Pope Zacharias had forbidden all dancing. A combination of Renaissance humanism and Royal patronage of the ballet de cour perhaps partly explains why, by the Baroque period, the Jesuit father Menèstrier appreciated dance to the extent he published its history in 1683. Yet, also in the seventeenth century, while Molière might have been popular at the French court and his entertainments, which integrated ballet into the whole event, attended by the highest in society, his body as being that of an entertainer was not permitted holy ground (Kirstein, 1969 [1935] 59).

The influence of the Church has fluctuated through its history, during which change and schisms have become intertwined with social and political upheaval. Thus it should not be thought of as one monolithic viewpoint shaping attitudes to the body or theatre. The Church's conceptual approach to the question of human ontology has been subject to much debate over the centuries leading to theological differences as to the source of 'original sin' (Russell, 1946, 383-384, 480-483).

However, in general terms, there is a pervasive legacy of Christian flesh:soul dualism predating 'Cartesian' body:mind dualism, and both contribute not only to popular conceptions of the material and non material aspects of 'self' but also to how that self is experienced. Through the influence of Neo-

Platonism, dualist influences may also be traced back to the ancient Greek philosopher Plato and his account of the theory of forms in Socrates' dialogues. For Plato, objects of sense were distinct from ideal forms, or real essences. His ideas, and in particular his concept of the 'form of the good' were drawn on by the Neo-Platonist, Plotinus whose ideas influenced the development of Christian theology (Flew, 1971, 46-69)^{iv}. Plato's image of men in a dark cave who see only shadows and not the things themselves (Plato in Flew, 1971, 67) may be felt to have seeped into the Christian consciousness which stresses a striving for 'higher truths' beyond what is given to the corporeal senses.

The influence of Christian dualism on dance is recognised by Hanna in relation to the Puritan influence in America and by Kirstein in relation to the historical roots of ballet. He adds that even in the twentieth century, at the time his history of dance was first published, the 'ballet girls' of La Scala were not permitted confession by the Catholic Church (Kirstein 1969 [1935]). Similarly Alexandra Carter reveals that in a largely Protestant, Victorian Britain in the late nineteenth century, the efforts of the Reverend Stewart Headlam to defend the 'ballet girls' at the Alhambra from charges of immorality lost him his parish (Carter, 2005, 112).

Protected at first by its Royal patronage and later by popularity amongst the developing professional classes, the future of theatrical dance was secure. Yet the legacy of Christian suspicion of the body shaped its development. A few years after the success of Le Ballet Comique de La Reine (1581) at the French court, a gentleman and canon of the church published a guide to the dances of the day. In Orchesography (1588), the author (one Jehane Taboruot using the pseudonym Thoinot Arbeau) was careful to establish the

decency of the dance he described. The book being contrived as a dialogue between the older Arbeau and the younger Capriol, gave the author the opportunity to answer concerns regarding historical attitudes to dance. Dance is legitimised by its practice amongst the ancients and its place in early religious events: Arbeau reminds Capriol that King David danced before the Ark of God (Arbeau, 1588 in Perugini 1935, 68). In addition, Arbeau is clear that most objections to dance have been in response to dance that has gone beyond what is decent. It is made clear that the kind of dancing that Capriol is anxious to learn is that which will be useful in courting with the intention of marriage and which Capriol would be happy to teach to his own younger sister (Perugini, 1935, 68-69). Decency within dance terms is here inexorably linked with the maintenance of stable social relations in which sexuality is controlled by social conventions.

This sense of legitimising some dance in relation to ideas of decency by contrasting them to more lewd forms of dance, is a recurring theme in the history of western dance. Lincoln Kirsten reports that the catechism of the Westminster Assembly (1643-7) opposed lascivious (as opposed to all) dancing (Kirstein, 1969 [1935] 176). As dance professionals developed dance as an art, controversies arose that drew on Christian sensibilities. For instance when Camargo shortened her skirts:

It promised to occasion a very dangerous schism. The Jansenists in the pit cried out heresy and scandal and refused to tolerate the shortened skirts. The Molinists^v, on the other hand, maintained this innovation was more in accordance with the spirit of the primitive church, which objected to pirouettes and gargouillades being hampered by the length of petticoats.

Grimm, in Kirstein, 1969 [1935] 208

The controversy that surrounded Camargo's skirt length echoes through western dance history. From her contemporary, Marie Sallé's, Greek drapery, to the tights of the late Romantic danseuse *en travestie* and Isadora Duncan's dancing in a flimsy tunic, pregnant and corset-less in the early twentieth century, changes in technique, style and expression demanded freedom of movement that have often challenged each era's conventions of modesty.

6.3 Gender Issues

Current awareness of the patriarchal emphasis of both Church and state makes it hardly surprising that it has been the costuming and presentation of the female dancer that has been of most concern. It can be argued that patriarchy is implicated by dualism: within a dualist approach, whether flesh;soul or body:mind, it has been harder for women to hide from others, and probably themselves, the actuality of their embodiment. Menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth and breast-feeding ensure an awareness of physicality. In the context of the Church's suspicion of the body, women may be viewed as inferior by virtue of the body's intrusion into the life of the mind or spirit. That dualism, whether Cartesian and/or Christian, favours the male has led some radical feminists to dream of achieving gender equality in societies where babies can be 'grown' without a womb (Lovell, 2000 [1996], 310). In Julia Kristeva's complex, psychoanalytically inspired account of child development she has suggested that immersion in the symbolic, enforces patriarchy and separates the child from the 'semiotic'^{vi} (not to be confused with conventional uses of the term) non verbal domain of the mother (Lovell, 2000b, 329-330). While the details of the early formation of the subconscious are beyond this discussion, it seems possible that the legacy of dualism, in distancing consciousness from embodied experience has suppressed

awareness of the latter, particularly amongst those more able to hide the reality of their embodiment from themselves. Within Christian traditions, it has been the 'lusts of the flesh' that are recognised as having reminded men of their physical being and thus threatened their mental capacities and spiritual virtues. Locating fleshly desire (and generally the loss of innocence and thus banishment from Eden) as a response to the temptations of women has served to maintain the dominant association of the male with the 'higher' values of the spiritual and mental set in dualist conflict with the physical.

Such attitudes have made the presence of the female dancer on a public stage problematic. By being presented to be viewed, dancing women all too easily became objects of male desire, the provocation for sinful lust.

Research by dance writer Sally Banes reveals that the Church has not only had to be concerned with the sin of lustful thoughts 'ballet girls' might engender amongst male spectators. In particular, at the Paris Opera during the rather decadent times of the Second Empire, ballet dancers were perceived as belonging to the *demi-monde*, a world beyond the confines of polite society. Banes reveals that the dancers were certainly thought of as available for sexual adventures and, drawing on the dance historian Lynn Garofola's research, points to the economic factors that may have fuelled their prostitution (Banes, 1998, 39). Whatever went on off stage, at a time when the strictures against extra marital relations were relaxed enough to allow for open recognition of desires beyond the marriage bed, there were those who made no secret of their openly sexualised approach to the on stage presence of female dancers:

I wager that eight out of every ten abonnés prefer
Pierre de Medicis to the fourth act of *Les*
Huguenots, and *Néméa* to *Guillame Tell*. And why?
Simply because Louise Fiocre shows her limbs in

Pierre, and her younger sister Eugenie shows much more than that in *Néméa*...

Charles, Yriarte, 1867, in Banes 1998, 38

It can also be argued that a more complex attitude to the female dancer was to be found at those times that more prurient attitudes held sway. While Ivor Guest's account of ballet in London in the 1840s suggests that at Drury Lane, and to a lesser extent Her Majesty's Theatre, liaisons between the dancers and wealthy men about town were not uncommon, Guest delights in how ballerinas in Victorian London could become the focus of romantic affections off stage leading to permanent relationships and even marriage in the case of Mrs Lyne Stephens, formerly Pauline Dauvernay (Guest, 1954, 73-74)^{vii}.

Banes reveals how French bourgeois concerns at the time of Louis Philippe's reign were reflected in conflicting attitudes to women in the Romantic Ballet of the 1830s and 40s. The Romantic ballet incorporated the sensual rather than casting it outside the realms of the aesthetic. The dual aspects of womanhood portrayed in the ballets were epitomised in the distinctions made by Théophile Gautier between the 'Christian Taglioni' and 'Pagan Elssler'.

Banes suggests that Carlotta Grisi, the first Giselle, was able to portray both the spiritual and the more earthly attributes of femininity. The scenario for this ballet, written by the great Romantic Théophile Gautier himself, Banes argues, upholds bourgeois values. In contrast to the Aristocratic tradition of *Droit du Cuissarge* (by which the nobleman had the right to enjoy sexual relations with servant girls living on his land), Albrecht's dalliance with the peasant girl Giselle is presented in the ballet as morally wrong and thus the source of the unfolding tragedy. However, although Prince Albrecht comes to recognise and regret the implications of his actions, the privileges due to his position in the social hierarchy are not challenged: at a spiritual level the peasant girl's love wins out over Myrthe's reign of revenge; but, at least in the

original scenario, Giselle's Prince, returning to the world of the living, will marry Bathilde in accordance with his rank. For Banes, at a political level, the ballet sustains individualism in the private sphere while giving sway to the demands of society in the public realm (Banes, 1999, 23-35).

In Banes' terms, in Giselle love is consummated spiritually rather than physically. A sublimated sexuality that drives the expression of spiritual love can be thought of as the theme of many 'white act' pas de deux from La Sylphide to Swan Lake. In her white tutu, the ballerina's image becomes layered with conflicting significances. She may be the object of male desire but is often unobtainable; while she may inspire and be herself capable of a spiritual form of love that conquers evil, no one marries the Sylphide or the Swan Princess (or at least not in this world). Further, it was not only in Giselle that the ballerina role required the dancer to portray conflicting aspects of womanhood. The tradition of the dual aspect of the ballerina continued, coming to its apotheosis in the role of Odette/ Odile in the Russian ballet of the late nineteenth century. In the Petipa /Ivanov Swan Lake (1995) the ballerina is expected to interpret different facets of femininity, the 'pure' Odette contrasting with the seductive temptress Odile.

The ballerina's allure may have, in part, been based on her extraordinary physical feats, suggesting sexual adventures beyond the confines of bourgeois norms. Yet it is not only the story lines that revealed that desire for her was to be repressed. In the years leading up to the period of the Romantic ballet much effort (including a Royal command of 1813) was put into ridding the stage on which she danced of the 'stage loungers' or fashionable rich young men. In their keenness to watch their favourite dancers at close quarters, they annoyed the critics who complained it was

hard to actually see the ballet from the auditorium (Guest, 1954, 21). Once the audience were cast beyond the proscenium, developments in stage lighting and scenery helped to sustain the other worldly illusion necessary. In dance terms, in much classical adagio the ballerina was displayed at arm's length from the man. The self control demanded of her, especially in order to achieve the balance demanded in pirouettes and adagio, suggests the domination of mind over body. (And it has been suggested in the discussion of Descartes how part of his legacy to western thought was to attribute mind's rational powers to God.) In ballet technique, balance has been achieved through strict muscular control, particularly over the pelvic area. While in technical term this relates to the transition of weight from torso to supporting leg, given the cultural context, the potential metaphoric significance of controlling this part of the body is hard to ignore. Moreover, the focus on upwards movement in ballet signifies the effort of renouncing more earthly existence. It was the choreographer Michel Fokine who in the early twentieth century, in trying to make ballet more emotionally naturalistic, recognised the symbolism of the Romantic tradition in ballet:

An arabesque is sensible when it idealises the sign^{viii}, because it suggests the body is straining to soar upwards

Fokine, 1916, 138

Romantic ballet can be viewed as embodying the struggle for individual expression set against rational geometry of technique and form. As the Russians developed the technique of the Romantic ballet they inherited from the French, they set great store in developing the use of arms and torso to mitigate the virtuosic control of the Italian school. For the Russian school the arms and *épaulement* lent a soulful aspect and grace to their art. The Italian

ballerina Legnani, who would first perform the thirty two fouetté turns as Odile, was 'transformed' (Roslavleva, 1966, 135) through working with the choreographer, Lev Ivanov, to develop the expressive use of torso and arms for the role of Odette in the white acts of the Petipa-Ivanov Swan Lake (1995). If the actions of Odette are considered, the upper body can be seen straining against the formal lines of the arabesque. Odette in yearning for freedom against the magician Rothbart's spell can be thought of as embodying the Romantic striving for release from the confines of rationalism's rules, those of behaviour as much as geometry^{ix}.

Arguably, the ballet's continued popularity lies in the embodiment of neo Romanticism, the dialectical pull between the increasing demands to conform to established norms and the recognition of a need for individual expression. It is thus possible to interpret Odette as the focus for desires beyond the sexual. However the white ballet may also be seen as embodying the sublimation of sexuality into a danced discourse of desire. In The History of Sexuality Volume 1, (1981) Michel Foucault argues against the generally held notion that the Victorian period saw the repression of sexuality. Rather he sees an increase in the discourses of sexuality and suggests a focus on the relationship between sex and power. Whether or not Foucault's analysis of sex and the Victorians is accepted, contemplating dance in relation to issues of how modern western societies have sought to control sexuality adds a dimension to contemplating the significance of the desirable, yet unobtainable, ballerina.

The latter interpretation may be particularly relevant to the development of British ballet in the mid twentieth century at a time when established codes of carefully regulated 'proper' behaviour were tested by the beginnings of the

sexual revolution. Bonnie Rowell, drawing on the research of Beth Genée, discusses how in the 1950s, as many of the arts in Britain responded to and even influenced social change, dance audiences clamoured for revivals of the 'classics' (Rowell, 2000, 193). In developing repertory for the Sadler's Wells (later Royal) Ballet in the 1930s and 40s, Ninette de Valois had been aware of the need to distance dance as an art from dance in the music hall by establishing a 'classical' tradition from the Petipa/Ivanov legacy. While the actual moral behaviour of dancers in London's music halls at the turn of the century is open to debate (Carter, 2005, 108-125), the reputation of the 'ballet girls' was such that the early progenitors of British Ballet needed to establish its respectability if they were to attract the responsible middle classes to support ballet and even to agree for their daughters to appear in performances. While such a tradition may have been intended to provide a foundation from which to grow British Ballet and develop new choreographers, this 'classical' heritage was very popular with audiences.

But were the audiences who flocked to the ballet the same as those who embraced the 'kitchen sink' drama? Or, in a class conscious Britain, were ballets set in the Royal courts of a mythical past more popular with those who were anxious about challenges to the status quo? In the mid twentieth century an audience enchanted by the glamour, on and off stage, of a ballet carefully positioned amongst the elite would be more likely to respond positively to the strivings of dissatisfied princes and spell bound princesses than marital breakdown in a bed sit. For many of the grandchildren of Victorian Britain, the stirrings of the sexual revolution may have affected their imaginations rather than their daily reality. For them, perhaps the image of the ballerina could become a symbol of female sexuality in an erotic combination of potentiality and constraint. That the glamour of this image could also have

lent itself to aspirations to transcend the barriers of class may have left a rich mix of connotations in the popular imagination. Such a heritage may still haunt today's perceptions of what a ballerina's dancing embodies and, by default shapes what is understood in different presentations of the female body in dance.

6.4 Feminist Perspectives

There is much about the contemporary image of the ballerina that, with the rise of feminism, has become problematic and the subject of much scrutiny. A survey of feminist approaches to (western) theatre dance is offered by the sociologist Helen Thomas (2003). She reports how the facts of the training regime and selection processes that demand a specific idealised body shape have attracted feminist criticism of the ballerina. Her account also demonstrates the appropriation, by a number of those writing on dance from a feminist perspective, of Laura Mulvey's (1975) Freudian, semiotic account of the 'male gaze'. Coming from the discipline of film studies, Mulvey suggested how the female is the object of the 'male gaze' in Hollywood films. According to Mulvey, the female is presented from the male point of view, films fostering this perspective from audiences through identification with the lead male main protagonist. Thomas reports how the 'male gaze' has been applied to dance to reveal 'ballet as a vehicle for patriarchal repression' (Thomas, 2003, 161). In particular, she describes how the ballerina in a pas de deux is presented as the passive object of male desire 'manipulated, dependent and supported by the male dancer' (Thomas, 2003, 161). A version of this argument which, emphasising Mulvey's more Freudian considerations, focuses on the ballerina's manipulation as a phallic object has also been developed by Rose English (1980), Susan Leigh Foster (1996) and in Ramsay Burt's (1995) discussion of the male dancer.

In contrast to what is written from an intellectual perspective, ballerinas' discussions of pas de deux reveal a relationship with the male dancer that is rarely completely one of passivity. (From a feminist perspective there might be interesting parallels between the problem of finding the right man to be a dance partner and the competition amongst women for a real life partner.) The subject of what a ballerina needs from her danseur may reveal how some accepted gender roles are certainly reinforced in ballet: traditionally the man needs to be strong and tall enough for partner work and this can make the search for a partner difficult for a taller ballerina (Beryl Grey quoted in Newman, 1982, 125). However, dance partners also need to be willing to develop a rapport in relation to how they interpret their roles, timing of lifts and musicality (Antoinette Sibley quoted in Newman, 1982, 258-259). For the ballerina there seems to be an expectation of partnership and a sense of being happier dancing solo if this is not possible (Grey, and Ashley in Newman, 1982, 125 and 387). In relation to Balanchine, (whose choreography was the subject of Ann Daly's concerns discussed in chapters two and three), there is a tacit acceptance that manipulation of the woman does occur. However, Tanaquil LeClercq, talking about her experience of The Four Temperaments reveals that this is within quite a dynamic interplay between the ballerina and her partners:

You don't get pushed around so much in that section, even when the four boys promenade you. You give your arm to one, you do arabesque, then you do soutenu on your own, then you give your arm to another one, and if he's good he stays out of your way. You do your arabesque minding your own business, unless he's a lump and knocks you off. And then there are two boys under your arms in that lift in the finale, and its only done twice. So you feel secure - no problems.

LeClercq, cited in Newman, 1982, 153.

Although from a feminist perspective supported adagio can be seen as the manipulation of woman as (fetish) object, the ballerina certainly enjoys an element of agency in her actual working relationships, albeit within a patriarchal framework. The dance critic Alastair Macaulay has offered an alternative interpretation of classical supported adagio as revealing 'a woman's need to be independent of, or remote from her partner'. This is in the context of a discussion of the choreographer Sir Frederick Ashton's pas de deux in which, according to Macaulay, 'the nearness of the bodies is all-important; we constantly sense two bodies seeking union' (Macaulay, 1994, 121). Macaulay also suggests that as a homosexual, Ashton may not have choreographed from a traditionally male perspective. From this viewpoint it seems that as 'progressive' attitudes to sex in western societies have emphasised mutual enjoyment and recognised variations in sexual preferences, dance has responded with explorations of sexual pleasure that are not purely derived from the dominant male and heterosexual point of view. The sense of the ballerina as (powerless) object of male desire thus may be overly simplistic.

In general terms, from a feminist perspective, representations of women that portray them as objects of male desire, lacking agency or bound by their reproductive function, are viewed as supporting the patriarchal system of women's oppression. The ballerina has thus fared badly in relation to feminist criticism, while the figures of the early modern dance have attracted complex debate. For instance, Helen Thomas points out that Isadora Duncan has been viewed as feminist in that she challenged the sexual repression of women, but in her representation of natural 'womanhood' is criticised by

feminists for sustaining the biological essentialism that sustains patriarchy (Thomas, 2003, 165). The dance critic, academic and artist Sarah Rubidge has also pointed to how constructions of gender inform what she sees as the subtext of a dance work:

Underlying attitudes about men and women are embedded in the movement language the choreographer chooses to use, in the setting, in the inter-relationship between the dancers on stage.

Rubidge, 1989, 3

For Rubidge, differences that reinforce gender distinctions are to be found in 'contemporary' dance as well as ballet. For instance, seemingly abstract works in uniform costuming that may appear to disregard gender differences may still differentiate gender in a manner consistent with existing stereotypes in terms of the movement vocabulary and dynamic content.

The four women I interviewed, working in different dance traditions and coming from different backgrounds in terms of ethnicity and class approached the subject of their gender and sexuality very differently in their dancing. In the interviews, although they asserted themselves as feminists to different degrees^x, they were certainly all aware of and influenced by feminist concerns. The increasing plurality of feminist voices means that even if they had all been consciously working from feminist perspectives, a black woman originally from a working class background, two white middle class women and one well educated South Asian woman would very likely encompass different facets of 'sisterhood'. What they did share was a strong expectation of control over their work that would have been impossible without twentieth century improvements to the rights of women in Britain. Moreover the development of the American modern dance tradition of the female concert

dancer, that had links with aspects of the early feminist movement, has provided for recognition of the work women choreograph for themselves. If the feminist notion of a pervasive patriarchy is accepted, what these artists' works represent are the ways in which individual and groups of women can develop a sense of agency to make strategic choices even in the face of patriarchal constraints.

Although not all necessarily emanating from a strict feminist viewpoint, three of the four female artists interviewed were aware of responding to audience's preconceptions of the female dancer's image. For example Nina Anderson, with some difficulty, ignores the unwritten rule that in the west, even in Egyptian dance, a female dancer should be slim. She has also decided not to undermine the sensuality of the dance form by maintaining an element of glamour in her costumes that emphasise the hip movements. In reviewing this section she commented further:

I think it is about more than the costuming – I think we are hampered by a restricted view of sensuality; I think I am working to a more encompassing “sensuality” which isn't about enticing men but which includes women in the story.

Anderson, 2007

Whilst her audience (and feminist critics) may thus perceive her presented as a sexual object it will be as one that will neither fit a fashionably small sized dress nor proscribed notions of female sexuality. An important part of Anderson's practice of Egyptian dance was to present images of women not restricted by western assumptions about the male gaze. She was aware of conflicting pressures and contradictions inherent in the situation of dancers in Egypt but still felt that this dance form allowed for a different understanding of women in performance that neither prioritised nor ignored sexuality.

Within the traditions of experimental contemporary dance, Gaby Agis, who was aware of her feminist perspective, was conscious of playing on idealised perceptions of herself to present an alternative view of female sexuality. She was aware that in her youth she had been perceived as a 'classic...in terms of a female kind of beauty' (Agis, 2003) and that this had an impact on her audience's expectations:

I was aware that there was a lot of imagery projected onto me - That was part of who I was and so therefore people came to see me in that context and expected to see something portrayed in that light - You might do something quite different.

Agis, 2003

As a dancer, Agis has at times been able to present a more everyday movement quality in task orientated movement that defies conventional ideas of female beauty in dance. At other times she has been able to project a sensuality that is not necessarily dependent on being the subject of a male gaze but that challenged established modes of feminist resistance:

A lot of feminists in that period would come and see the work and we would be very, very fragile and very exquisite and very, very and sensual...

Agis, 2003

In contrast Artist A had, in a previous work, responded to the pressures she had experienced to conform to bodily norms in dance and wider society. Her work had explored ways of representing the experience of plastic surgery. However she had needed the support of a mentor to consider confronting the audience in this work (Artist A, 2002).

The pressure to conform to ideals related to gender stereotypes also seemed to be as strongly felt by the two men. Artist D commented on the difference he had experienced between Europe and America. In America, what he called the 'cowboy' legacy meant he had felt his lack of muscle bulk had made it more difficult for him to be successful as a dancer. In the field of 'contemporary' dance he had found Europeans more willing to accept him as tall and thin. However, Artist B remembered as a young man checking his moves in the mirror to ensure he had the right look. The dance battles that took place in the jazz clubs of his youth demanded an ultra masculine persona. In later life, while in his dance works he has been able to poke fun at (and more recently question) this macho posing, it is noticeable he still maintains something of the muscular physique required for this style.

That both the men I interviewed were from ethnic minorities brought into consideration that the problem of dancers being perceived as sexual objects is not confined to women. The legacy of slavery, discussed in the previous chapter, brings more complexity to the issue of the 'gaze' of the spectator: the black male body may be felt to be as much a commodity as that of women of all ethnicities. However, these two men seemed confident in their ability to guide their audience's response. Artist B saw the structuring of the choreography as playing an important part in this while Artist D viewed the dancer as having a choice as to how much of their sexual nature they revealed on stage.

6.5 Sex and Aesthetics

While it is the issue of responses to female dancers that have been the subject of much analysis and discussion, as discussed above, male dancers have also been recognised as objects of desire. Nijinsky's dismissal from the

Imperial Russian Ballet ostensibly for wearing too skimpy a costume that offended the Royal Family and ladies in the audience shows such sensibilities predated later advances in feminism (Bourman, 1937, 190-194). That males can be viewed as objects of desire within patriarchy is accounted for by Ramsay Burt in terms of the homosexual gaze, but he also concludes that more recent examples of male dancers as objects of desire also relate to female sexual freedom of expression. Similarly Susanne Moore, in discussing the female gaze in relation to cinema has argued: 'that the codification of men via male gay discourse enables a female erotic gaze' (Moore, 1988, 53). Such a viewpoint could support Macaulay's analysis of Ashton's pas de deux. However, it is also possible that just as homosexual desire remained tacitly acknowledged even while Church and state denied its legitimacy, so did awareness of women's enjoyment of their sexuality. Arguably, during those periods when the virtues of Christian controls over fleshly pleasures were most promulgated, the potential for dance to reveal what in polite society might not be said offered the potential for dancers and audiences, regardless of gender, to explore the constraints surrounding sexual expression^{xi}.

With generally more liberal attitudes to sex emerging in Britain during the last part of the twentieth century there has been more overt recognition of the place of sex in theatre dance. In the works of Kenneth Macmillan, what might be seen as the delicately played sexual nature of many Ashton ballets of the 1950s and 1960s was replaced by the impossible to miss grappling of a sexual nature in Manon and Mayerling in the 1970s. In their time these ballets may have dismayed the traditionalists, but the shock value of ballet as sexually explicit has been replaced by a growing acceptance of the presence of sexuality as one facet of theatre dance. If on Foucault's terms we consider

the relationship between power and desire, it could be argued that as dance moves into the twenty first century the dancers' bodies no longer present a danced discourse of desire but of control. Where dance is performed to audiences more relaxed about sex, the dynamic of controlled sexuality loses its charge making control an end in itself.

This last idea is related to the discussion in the next chapter as to how capitalism can be perceived as intertwined with attitudes shaping perceptions of dancers. However, what I want to focus on here is that for dancers, whether male or female, the legacy of Christian dualism intertwined with body:mind dualism, has, at least in the past, jeopardised their status as artists. While this may be changing, what is of concern is that currently in Britain it seems that some dancers seem to run the risk of being devalued more than others.

As has been discussed in chapters two and three, although not a necessary condition of any single instance of art, the potential for aesthetic experience has been and, it has been argued, still is important to (western) conceptions of art. Drawing on the work of Pierre Bourdieu and Norbert Elias I explored the possible equation between the notion of aesthetic distance and the 'habitus' (in Bourdieu's terms) of the privileged classes in western society. Copeland's approach to Balanchine, I argued, reveals the extent to which in the 'high culture' of western civilisation, through the cultivation of aesthetic enjoyment, perception of dance as art can be experienced as distanced from what are viewed as 'extra aesthetic' considerations. In discussing Roger Copeland's defence of an updated formalism in relation to appreciation of Balanchine, I suggested that in focussing on aspects of Balanchine's ballet that abstract the human body, Copeland relied heavily on the notion of the

‘disinterested aesthetic’. I have argued that in western culture, the body and sexuality have been set in opposition to more spiritual concerns that are closely connected to the prioritising of mind over body. Given also the feminist challenges to patriarchal representations of the female image, it is hardly surprising that it has been sexual interpretations of the physical manipulation of the ballerina in some of Balanchine’s ballets that have been at the centre of disputes about his work that demand consideration beyond the formal aspects of the choreography.

Although, as discussed above, attitudes are changing, my own experience of theatre dance in Britain suggests that in relation to ballet, by too openly eliciting a sexual response the dancer may be seen as endangering the audience’s ability to maintain aesthetic distance which can lead to their performance being devalued, unless the sexual attractiveness of the dancer is ‘framed’ in such a manner as to suggest either she (and nowadays he) is unobtainable, or that her/his presence is intended to comment on aspects of sexuality. At the same time, in a more ‘contemporary’ or post modern dance perspective, particularly in relation to female dancers, the presentation of the female form for the enjoyment of the (male) gaze is likely not only to attract feminist criticism but more widely be seen as a signal not to take the work too seriously. In dance that enjoys a high cultural status it seems to be important that what may be very evident sexuality is seen as controlled. By savouring the passionate expression of a ballerina in *Manon* (1974) or the sensitive intimate physical responses in an improvised dance, the audience demonstrates their ability to reciprocate in the recognition of controlled sexuality. That in other forms of dance this control may be viewed as lacking is perhaps one factor affecting perceptions of dance in musical theatre as having less ‘high cultural’ status. Traditionally while dancers in musicals are

thought of as less controlled 'technically' than their classical counterparts, the chorus line are generally required to be more sexually alluring than the corps de ballet. Their dancing uses a more direct focus rather than the traditional extended lofty gaze of the ballet dancer. Moreover their hips may be controlled in series of complex isolations, but what the audiences often recognises is hip 'wriggling' with all its connotations. As Alexandra Carter (2005) discusses in relation to ballet in the nineteenth century London music hall, there was a distinction in the reputations for sexual availability between chorus girls and the corps de ballet and this may well still influence expectations today that frame how the dancers are perceived on stage. For the artists I interviewed, there seemed to be a generally accepted equation between dance that was recognised to have an overtly sexual attraction, particularly jazz, and the commercial field.

6.6 Erotic 'Others'

In spite of the acknowledgement of artists such as Katherine Dunham, who provided insights into the ways sexuality is governed in some African and African Caribbean dance (Burt, 2001, 84), audiences may be less willing to view dance that draws on these traditions as embodying a controlled sexuality. In part, this may be linked to the different uses of the body. Within the context of western dance traditions which have sought to control actions of the hips, any dance form in which articulation of the torso draws attention to movement of the pelvis may be interpreted sexually. In addition, as was discussed in chapter five, perceptions of 'non western' dance also carry the vestiges of how 'other' cultures have been viewed by the west, particularly in relation to the control of sexuality. A combination of attitudes to sexuality, the arts and dance have thus tended to make it more difficult for those drawing

on dance forms 'other' than ballet and contemporary dance to be valued as artists.

Artist B also recognized that in relation to the commercial sector, dancers were likely to be perceived in relation to their sexual attractiveness. This could impact more on black dancers than white since, at least until recently black dancers might be more likely to be channelled into jazz dance.

However in making work for black dancers that draws on a range of dance forms, this choreographer was adamant that the audience would not be able to focus on the sexual attractiveness of the dancers due to the way the performers were presented. This artist showed his customary determined sense of agency to shape the perceptions of his audience. Watching a rehearsal, verbal references to the serious themes, the strength of the interactions between the dancers and what at times could become a confrontational approach to the audience would make it very unlikely for the audience to focus on the performers as objects of desire (at least in relation to usual norms).

Recognition of how dance that is perceived as 'sexy' can be less valued as art was apparent in Anderson's discussion of Egyptian dance in Britain. According to this artist, when promoting their dance as an art form in London, some Egyptian dance practitioners focussed on presenting their work in established arts venues and the more glitzy attachments to costumes, which compound every shake of the hips, were dispensed with. In their place, long dresses enhance the line of the body so that hip drops and figures can be seen as spatial configurations requiring a precise technique. In contrast, Anderson recognised that she felt able to use elements that within a (western) theatrical context might be thought to belong to the cabaret. Talking

about how she approached teaching dance to other women she commented on how a woman can display herself as sexual without resorting to 'sleaze' or being vulgar:

You can be playful and teasing but "women of good family". In Egypt dancers will be playful and teasing but it's not as sexual... You would play and tease and project to everybody in the audience; you are not projecting say [only] to men. It's that dichotomy - It's having an open attitude to what being playful and teasing can be. And that can be a bit difficult because, especially with this dance, it's got a lot of baggage.

Anderson, 2004

As we discussed her dancing in relation to other approaches to Egyptian dance, it seemed to me that Anderson was offering an alternative to either an overtly sexualised representation of Egyptian dancers, that perhaps relies on a western exoticism of 'Easternness', or the more svelte, streamlined look of some alternative approaches to Egyptian dance that emphasise attributes that are often identified with 'contemporary' dance. She had spent much time playing with elements of her costume to create an image that related to a 'persona' she described as 'daughter of the country', a female figure in touch with her sexuality who still presented a sense of tradition and who for Anderson (2007) represented a kind of 'wholesomeness'.

Alternative ways of presenting women in relation to their sexuality is something of a tradition in modern dance dating back to Isadora Duncan's concert dances and Ruth St Denis' danced portrayal of exotic beauties. That St Denis took her inspiration from 'non western' sources to achieve this was no accident but drew on a developing orientalism within western culture. The Denishawn project promoted dance very carefully as a safe middle class

activity, eschewing vaudeville for the concert hall and promoting the school as suitable for young ladies. By positioning herself in relation to the interests of an educated, mainly female, audience, St Denis could offer the opportunity for them to reflect on aspects of sexuality in a manner removed from the crudity of the music hall (Banes, 1998, 89). Unlike Anderson, who has made a very thorough study of the techniques and styles of the dance tradition she draws on, Ruth St Denis depended on a more imaginative approach to arrive at what to her (and presumably to her audience) were more evocations of a distant world peopled by 'others'. Her original inspiration for an Egyptian dance did not come from the study of Raqs Sharki but purportedly from a depiction of Isis on a cigarette advertisement (St Denis, 1939, 52). While she undoubtedly made attempts to research her work more than this suggests and by her own accounts drew on what she could find out from libraries, museums and personal contacts (St Denis, 1939,) St Denis' impressionistic appropriation of 'other' cultures dates her work. Yet the positioning of the sexual aspects of the work towards those with the ability to articulate intellectual concerns about the nature of sexuality was important to the development of American modern dance (Banes 1998, 66). While work that is perceived as mere sexual titillation is devalued, work that is understood to comment on perceptions of sexuality or the nature of desire can take its place as art. Ironically for Anderson, it is this tradition that may provide for artistic approval of her work. As a British woman of African Caribbean ethnicity, conscious of the African heritage within Egyptian dance, Anderson offers a more complex intercultural exploration of sexuality than would have been possible for St Denis. That this artist recognises the influence of Hollywood depictions of Egyptian dance on the presentation of dance in Egyptian cabaret itself further layers her understanding and suggests how the boundaries between dance traditions were permeated long before the effects

of Globalisation became a topic for academic discussion. The links between Denishawn and early Hollywood^{xii} suggest traces may be found of Ruth St Denis' approach to dance influencing dance traditions in Egypt itself.

Working out of the South Asian dance tradition of kathak, Sushma Mehta was aware of the dubious position of female dancers in India's history. Perhaps like the twentieth century figures of ballet and modern dance, who sought to establish their dance as art, she was still concerned with ensuring the acceptance of dance as a worthy profession for women. Her account of the changing position of female dancers within the history of South Asian dance, along with Anderson's perceptions of the status of dancers in Egypt, highlight that it is has not only been in Christian dominated western culture that perceptions of the female dancer have been problematic. Moreover in her discussion of how the codification of dance movement reinforces norms of polite behaviour, there is a distinction between decent and indecent that is reminiscent of attitudes that shaped the development of (western) theatre dance. What is not considered polite may take different forms but there is a recognisable contrast between what is and is not acceptable.

Especially if you are a girl, you are taught not to sit with your legs apart - So in kathak you would never see (nowadays they are doing a little more) somebody sitting with their legs apart. In South Asian culture and dance it would be considered unaesthetic and a bit vulgar. One thing that I would feel very hesitant to use is a sitting position with legs really wide apart and facing the audience.

If you wanted to show an intimate scene like a sexual encounter you would only suggest it though symbolic [action], through coming close - But in kathak we do not touch because touching is considered to be like kissing in public. It is not readily accepted. We won't show that kind of intimacy - Now I have seen people touching a little

more, but originally in kathak you could be very close but not actually touching...

Mehta, 2003, edited 2007

While for traditional Asian audiences this artist recognised the need for a subtle approach to sexual themes, they are not in themselves out of bounds. Many traditional kathak dances deal with earthly love and, in the same discussion, Mehta reported a fellow kathak artist had recently made a work on a lesbian theme.

Mehta felt that some restrictions on the body equated to attempts to rid dance of some of the connotations of the past. Historically dance had been an important part of Hindu religion but had fallen into disrepute, with dancers becoming viewed as courtesans. Referring to sculptures of dancers from the past she understood there had been hip movements that did not now feature in classical dance. She described that when the kathak tradition (that fused elements of Hindu and Islamic heritage) had been revived the hip movements were eschewed to avoid any 'vulgar' associations. But was this the result of Victorian sensibilities adopted during the days of the British Empire, or related to attitudes that predated the days of the Raj? This artist also reported that some kathak teachers were beginning to encourage more use of the body:

It's delicate body movement but it's come back. It's encouraged now to use the body a little more but in a disciplined way. Bending is never from the front. When we bend it's from the side - from the hips. It's got certain rules. If you break them then you've got to know what the rules are to be able break them.

Mehta, 2003, edited 2007

Again, it is difficult to discern whether these changes relate to a revival of aspects of older traditions or the influence of western sensibilities. At the turn of the twentieth century both in ballet and the early modern dance, an emphasis was made on the connections between gesture and the whole body: the once straight-and-laced-up-in-corsets torso was freed to move. The dancers in photographs of early Fokine ballets^{xiii} can be seen straining against tight bodices to bend sideways while, less encumbered by clothing or tradition, the modern dance led the way in the exploration of all the different ways the spine could move. Are kathak dancers, like ballet dancers before them, responding to a freeing up of attitudes to the body and sexuality, or are they retrieving a dance tradition from the restricting influence of earlier western sensibilities while maintaining a distance from what might be seen as the more degenerate attitudes in contemporary western society? Such a question is made more complex by evidence that western dancers in the early twentieth century influenced the re-emergence of South Asian dance (Hanna, 1993). It reveals the complex inter cultural shaping of perceptions of what is embodied in dance and hints at how, in a complex culture, such questions may be answered differently according to the background and experiences of the person answering. Moreover, within the traditions of theatre dance in Britain, it may be considered that dancers have often been considered as 'other' even when they belonged to what was thought of as a homogenous culture:

It is my firm belief that human society is divided into three distinct castes, Russian dancers, dancers and very ordinary people.

Haskell, 1979 [1934], 22

In seeing dancers as 'other', Haskell may have recognised a physicality that he felt was missing in early twentieth century British social behaviour. In a society such as Britain, that successfully adopted a Cartesian approach to analysing the problems of the sciences, industry and every day life, it is possible that members of that society have struggled to re-engage with the actuality of their embodiment. Perhaps Haskell approached dancers, and particularly Russian dancers tinged by oriental exoticism, as 'other' by virtue of their having to engage with their embodiment in order to dance.

6.7 Dualism and Difference

I have argued that the legacy of dualism can be considered as underlying the distancing of consciousness that in (western) theatre dance sustains the, often painful, control of the body. In addition, this same consciousness, at a distance from the body, may be equated with both the notion of aesthetic distance and an awareness of the gulf between self and other. Dualism of body:mind, intertwined with the Christian dualism of flesh:soul, has shaped attitudes to dance in western theatres and, in particular, concerns with how to display the body on stage. Within the context of Christian traditions, sexuality has been particularly problematic for dance as art. As the Church's power has diminished, more relaxed attitudes to sexuality have provided a context that allows for the appreciation of sexuality within the realms of art. It is thus not surprising that audiences saw new embodiments of the sexual self emerging in the more secular twentieth century. However, the extent to which sexuality is acknowledged in relation to the dancer as artist can be affected by class,

gender and ethnicity. Western attitudes to 'other', 'non western' cultures as being less regulatory of sexuality have influenced how 'non western' dance has been viewed. Depending on the context, in the first half of the twentieth century this led both to the censorship of Katherine Dunham's Rites of Passage in Boston in 1944 (Burt, 2000 ,79) and a fascination with the exotic 'other' that fuelled audiences for both Denishawn and Diaghilev's orientalism.

Today the picture is far more complex. While past exoticism still may influence perceptions of 'non western' dance as being more overtly sexual than western dance, in Britain we are becoming increasingly aware of how 'non western' cultures regulate sexuality. Indeed the freedom for most British women to dress in revealing clothes without it being presumed they are sexually available contrasts with our increasing awareness of stricter rules for some, particularly Muslim women. Yet, whilst in contemporary Britain attitudes have been changing in relation to ethnicity, class and gender, to what extent is the dancer still viewed as 'other', the other being those who have (re-)learned to be more consciously aware of their bodily actuality? And, as such, are dancers all too easily viewed as objects of desire?

As was discussed in the previous chapter, perceptions of difference are significant to the appreciation of dance in a culturally diverse city such as London. As globalisation brings cultures into play with one another, both in culturally diverse cities like London and on a global, political scale, what is understood as embodied in a dance becomes implicated in an ever more complex web of bodily significance. Such a multiplicity of points of view is often regarded as a key feature of arts in the postmodern period and is often linked with poststructuralist approaches to dance that, as was discussed in chapter four, may emphasise a challenge to the norms that are thought to

maintain social inequalities. In this context, tensions between 'old', 'high' culture and 'new', postmodern culture may be understood as battle lines being drawn in bodies, in how they should look, act and be 'read'. For instance if a ballerina opens her legs wide, her action is most likely to be discussed in terms of formal geometry, technique or 'line': perception of her actions is shaped by traditions in 'high' culture' by which the percipient observes a proper aesthetic distance. Moreover, if the ballerina's actions are seen as sexually charged this may well be savoured at a distance and related to elements of plot or theme that are seen as an important part of the work of art. A refusal to view the work this way (as in the discussion of The Four Temperaments) is thus seen as a challenge to the work's artistic status. In contrast if a black jazz or street dancer moves his/her hips the action is probably seen in sexual terms and viewing such dance as art may be seen as a broadening of traditional aesthetics.

6.8 Embodying New Corporealities

Dance artists, reacting to the potentially negative aspects of a focus on their body as object to be viewed, may be seen as resisting overly instrumental attitudes to the body by drawing attention to the subjective experience of the dancer. This may be informed by a critical response to what is perceived as the continuation of the dualist legacy, perhaps in mechanistic training methods or performance styles that emphasise visual image over felt experience. That the emphasis on control of the body and formal qualities are most associated with 'high' cultural forms such as ballet may add a political dimension to some criticisms of perceived dualism in dance, particularly in relation to feminist approaches (even though some feminist approaches to dance seem to fall into the trap of supplanting a focus that distances sexual and other interests to another that prioritises them). However, the antagonism

to dualism reveals a theoretical problem for dancers. While dualism allows for a causal relation between consciousness and action, the opposite, currently more accepted, physicalist attitude to the mind:body makes popular assumptions of the relationship between a dancer's thoughts, feelings and actions problematic.

As was discussed in chapter four, what dance artists seem to seek is the phenomenological experience of communication in performance, drawing on a variety of strategies to encourage the audience to experience a sense of interaction, responding to the dancer as agent capable of an in-the-moment embodying of intentionality. Hence there has been an appropriation of the terminology of phenomenology such as the 'lived body'. Dancers focussing on the lived experience of dance practices in which they strive for body/mind integration can be seen as responding, however theoretically naively, to what they experience as the problems of dualism's legacy. To return to Varela's discussion of the concept of the 'lived body', while recognising its usefulness in terms of shifting sensibilities, his criticism of it is that it ultimately results in a 'reversing of the centre of privilege in Cartesian dualism from mind to body as lived' (1997, 219). Varela argues neither mind nor body (lived or otherwise) can exercise the agency of intentionality as it is people that intend, people who are 'causal in their exercise of agency'. This shift from body to person is important, since for Varela agency can be causal because it is embedded in the social. Varela may however be misrepresenting phenomenology, for one of its main protagonists has claimed:

The phenomenological world is not pure being, but the sense which is revealed when the paths of my various experiences intersect, and also where my own and other people's engage each other like gears. It is thus inseparable from subjectivity and intersubjectivity.

In such a context dancers in performance can be seen as engaged in a social act. This makes sense of dancers' emphasis on dance as a communicative phenomenon but may be interpreted as placing their dance on a collision course with formalist aesthetics and thus with assumptions that still seem to be contained in notions of 'high' culture. However it is important to stress that if dancers in performance are engaged in a social act, it is in one that plays a very specific part in cultural life that is subject to complex codes of communicative relations between dancers and audience. Aesthetic traditions have played their part in shaping these. However much dance artists may encourage their audience to engage with them as people, no one today expects a member of a theatre audience to be so entranced by a dancer that they try to leap on the stage to dance with them. Where in experimental arts events, or at the presentation of African-Caribbean or Egyptian dance forms in predominantly 'white' venues, the audience are expected to interact more closely with performers, my experience is that such crossing of boundaries usually takes much persuasion.

Within the controlled setting of (western) theatre dance, those artists who focus their audience's attention on the corporeal can do so in an attempt to encourage awareness of those aspects of human experience that may be felt to be undervalued or ignored in contemporary western society. Hence physical sensitivity and awareness, the ability to respond spontaneously to others and that sense of connection to others and the environment are valued in performance. These are skills that may be felt to have been stifled by the legacy of dualism. However, this is a carefully selected corporeality that keeps intact the controls on bodily hygiene and, in performance at least,

on sexuality. Parts of what is seen as dualism's legacy may be challenged but the new corporeal emphasis would not have been possible without it.

Notes to Chapter Six

- ⁱ It can be argued that the Roman Inquisition posed little real threat to academics, but Descartes postponed publication of his work after Galileo in 1633 was prudently emphatic in his renunciation of his findings: 'And if I contravene any of these said promises, protests, or oaths, (which God forbid!) I submit myself to all the pains and penalties which by the Sacred Canons and other Decrees general and particular are against such offenders imposed and promulgate' (<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1630galileo.html>).
- ⁱⁱ Descartes himself suggested the pineal gland as the point of interaction. See Wilkinson (2000) pp35-44 for a discussion of the problem of mind-body interaction in Descartes' two substance dualism.
- ⁱⁱⁱ 80% of professional dancers and vocational dance students responding to a survey in 2004 had incurred at least 1 injury over the previous 12 month period (Laws, 2004.)
- ^{iv} That Plotinus' writings also influenced Islamic philosophy adds to the complexities of intercultural influences existing prior to the more recent 'globalisation' discussed in chapter five.
- ^v The inconsistencies in religious attitudes are highlighted here by the fact that in opposition to the Protestantism of the Jansenists at least some Catholics (the Molinists) could admit the significance of dance to early Christianity.
- ^{vi} For Kristeva, according to Lovell, the 'semiotic chora' refers to the 'pulsation' and rhythms' of the infant's early, even antenatal environment. What Kristeva terms the symbolic order would be organised by those linguistic structures that are generally discussed within conventional 'semiotics'.
- ^{vii} Her body was laid to rest at her husband's estate at Roehampton.
- ^{viii} Fokine strived for a symbolist fusion of form and expression in his idea of the 'sign' (Carr, 1989).
- ^{ix} See accounts of the choreography for Odette in Siegel 1972 and 1977.
- ^x Agis and Artist A stated their feminist perspective when asked directly.
- ^{xi} Hanna (1988, 250) makes a similar point in relation to more recent dance in America where it was not the church but fear of litigation that limited what could be openly stated. Hanna, while recognising the role of the viewer in constructing meaning suggests some dances carry a 'hidden' messages that may be understood to challenge patterns of dominance. That those in authority tend to dismiss dance as entertainment means they are unlikely to be concerned with such significances. In America in the 80's the establishment's main concern still seemed to be overt 'genitally connected' dance behaviour.
- ^{xii} For instance Ruth St Denis choreographed dances for *Intolerance* and D.W. Griffiths sent his actresses to Denishawn classes (Shelton, 1981, 136-137).
- ^{xiii} See for example the photo of *Les Sylphides* in Paris 1909 (Lifar, 1954, 160-161).

7

Dance Styles and Skills: Significance in a Postmodern Context

7.0 Introduction

In the previous chapters it has been suggested that (western) theatre dance can be viewed as a particular sort of cultural act in which the phenomenological experience of communication may be felt to be important even though it is often hard to state precisely just what has been communicated. In this chapter I will explore how within such a framework, and within the context of a postmodern urban environment, what are thought of as 'style' and 'skill' in dance may be seen as significant. The discussion will thus build upon previous chapters not least in considering how within contemporary, culturally diverse cities such as London, culturally shared significance can hardly be taken for granted.

It can be tempting in the postmodern era to consider questions of significance and value only within genre specific frameworks. Drawing on the discussion of the relationship of dance to the wider culture(s) explored in chapters three and five, dance genres such as ballet, kathak or hip hop can be considered to relate to aspects of specific cultures from which judgements as to meaning and worth may be derived. Hence the 'right' bodily attitude in hip hop may be seen to parallel values in urban youth culture, in which context differences in bodily stance might be understood that might not be clear to a middle class, middle aged, white audience. Similarly, the stress on clarity of geometric positions in ballet that have a value and significance rooted in European cultural history may seem curious to a young black British urban generation.

However, notwithstanding the importance of recognising significance and value in relation to the specific demands of genre, developing upon the findings of the previous chapters I will continue to reflect on whether dances made and performed by artists working in different genres and coming from different cultural backgrounds, but living and working in the same city, may be seen to be responding to similar cultural concerns. This may reveal pressures, the responses to which, while shaped differently within a variety of dance and cultural contexts, emanate from the broader social context. In addition to reflections on the significance of style and skill in a range of dance, discussions with artists will also be drawn on. It will be important, in relation to these latter, to recognise that the artists selected for this study, while enjoying various levels of success, are not making work for mainstream dance companies. Thus they are likely, indeed were chosen, to view what they may well see as dominant culture(s) from a critical distance.

Before entering into these matters, I will first develop some of the themes that have emerged in previous chapters to explore further how, from a theoretical viewpoint, dance may be conceived as a communicative phenomenon. This will be important as, while not disputing the problematic nature of the communicative phenomenon in the context of diversity and globalisation, I will return to the consideration that a key aspect of what is perceived as important in dance as art within the cultural context of contemporary London is its potential to communicate to (or rather with) audiences whose daily life emphasises communication as fraught with difficulties.

7.1 Dance as a Communicative Phenomenon

In order to discuss dance as a communicative phenomenon there is a need for clarity with regard to the different ways in which dance can be thought of as communicative. The analysis of dance as communication is generally considered either in relation to semiotic approaches to significance or to phenomenological accounts which prioritise the experience of the observer. However, as has been discussed previouslyⁱ, an understanding of communication might better draw on an interplay between semiotics and phenomenology.

In relation to the semiotic tradition, for the purpose of clarification it may be helpful to return to the distinctions that the linguist Roman Jakobson (2000) [1960] made between different functions of communication which, in relation to Susan Foster's approach to 'reading dance', were discussed in chapter twoⁱⁱ. Jakobson's structuralist and functionalist approach to communication can be a useful analytic means to consider aspects of dance as communicative. Allied with an intentionalist approach to choreography, it is possible to discern between the 'emotive', which reveals an artist's attitude to a subject, and the 'poetic', in which the emphasis is on the dance medium. In dance, as has been discussed by Valerie Preston-Dunlop (1998, 27-36), the 'emotive'ⁱⁱⁱ function of the performer (which in this study has been one and the same as the choreographer) can be very important.

In the early development of (historical) modern dance^{iv} it could be argued that the emotive function was prioritised by individual dance artists such as Graham and Wigman to develop new choreographic styles, the formal aspects of such dance drawing on an individually focussed expression. The poetic focus that, for Jakobson, dominates in art, fitted the aesthetic of much

modernist dance of the mid twentieth century that emphasised the exploration of the dance medium in both abstract and individually expressive terms. Choreographic style tended to be concerned with individual development from a starting point in a known dance tradition or traditions. It thus tended to reflect both the norms of the specific culture and the individual attitudes and preferences of the individual. Balanchine's modernist exploration of ballet, and Cunningham's development of American modern dance can be viewed in this way. In the latter case, the use of chance methods in the choreographic process may arguably have diminished authorial intention, but even in the choice of chance, along with the careful development of a dance technique, the choreographer's individual 'style' becomes evident.

Within Jakobson's framework the 'conative' and 'referential' are perhaps the functions that for dance are most problematic: Precision in relation to either what is demanded of the addressee or to what is referred is more difficult in dance than in words. Choreographers have conventionally relied on programme notes and more recently on text or video to support the referential function and codified mime (such as found in classical ballet and kathak) for dance intended to be conative or referential. Jakobson's theories have been further developed by Foster (1986) and Jordan and Thomas (1998) to allow for an understanding of the referential and conative functions as more complex, bringing a poststructuralist slant to their uses of structuralist analysis.

As Preston-Dunlop (1998, 27-36) reveals, developing on from Jakobson, the choreographer's playing with phatic and metalingual functions can be

significant, especially in a postmodern context. The importance of the 'phatic' function or 'contact' aspect of communication has gained emphasis alongside a concern with the use of 'code'. Where clear demarcations between genres have been maintained, audiences have in common that generally they do not need to be guided as to how to approach the communicative aspect of a dance work. Whether it is a performance by the Royal Ballet of nineteenth century repertoire, a street dance competition, or a culturally specific 'non western' dance performance form in the appropriate and relevant community venue, the contact and code aspects are generally taken for granted. However, from the later years of the twentieth century, the array of approaches to how the dance event should be presented and the range of cultural traditions that could be drawn on have become ever more complex. Increasingly choreographers and those presenting their work are testing the boundaries between genres. Choreographers, by drawing on a range of cultural influences in their dances, make audiences more reliant on overt signals to orientate themselves to the work and to understand how to 'decode' it. Those programming performance seasons may seek to encourage 'new audiences' to their venue or to explain to their existing audiences how to approach the sampling of something new and different. Even audiences occasionally stray across those unseen boundaries which provide for the make up of the majority of the audience at Covent Garden being different in matters of class and culture to those at an annual street dance competition^v. In response to the potential confusion the poststructuralist notion of 'framing' (that Foster, 1986, also draws on) can be understood as overlapping with Jakobson's analysis of the 'phatic' function and 'code' in the efforts made to prepare the audience to experience the work as communicative. For instance when Hip Hop made it to the mainstream in dance, Sadlers' Wells publicity for the first Breakin' Convention (2004)

signalled the significance of street dance battles to a public broader in age and cultural experience than the young aficionados who would know what to expect. William Forsythe's Steptext (1996) [1984] was the subject of a television programme (BBC, 2000) that demonstrated how the choreographer's use of an avant garde tactic in starting before the house lights dim, signals to the audience at the Royal Opera House to expect the unexpected and a questioning of conventional codes utilised in ballet. Jennifer Jackson, in an intertextual analysis of this work, draws on poststructuralist accounts of Steptext to point out the importance of metalinguistic analysis of ballet itself as the subject of the dance (Jackson, 1999, 108).

Jakobson's theory offers some useful tools with which to contemplate the semiotic significance of a dance work with regard to the interrelationship of different communicative functions. For instance Jordan and Thomas' (1998) criticism of Anne Daly's approach to The Four Temperaments is related to the appropriate balance of the poetic and referential function. However, the development of poststructuralist intertextual perspectives have, as was also discussed in chapter two, made it difficult to prioritise any referential aspect or 'text' in the 'reading' of a work. Bringing into play intertextual analysis of the dance as 'read', with the phenomenological experience of watching dance may be fruitful in returning an emphasis to the significance of bodily action. This is with the proviso that phenomenological claims to reveal the dance 'in itself' or to 'commune' with the essential significance of the dance are treated with caution. Rather, as discussed in chapter four, it is the phenomenological experience of embodied significance that may be sharable even if it is based on semiotic systems in which the relationship between sign and signifier will rarely stay fixed for long. An approach that brings the in-the-moment

experience into play with semiotics has been suggested by Csordas (1994) and relates closely to Charles Varela's (1997) concern to develop Saussure's later work on the relationship between language and gesture. To explore such an approach further it will be useful to reflect on the later work of the existential phenomenologist, Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

7.2 Between Structure and Agency: Merleau-Ponty's Account of Reciprocity

Although regarded as a phenomenologist, Merleau-Ponty drew on a whole range of theory in his work. While his use of research findings in psychology is well known, his exploration of structuralism is less so. This may in part be due to this not fitting in with his label as a phenomenologist, and partly because his approach was, to say the least, idiosyncratic. In contrast to the emerging structuralists, Merleau-Ponty's response to Saussure was to look in his work for 'a way of understanding how subjects polarise a set of instituted signs in ways that enable them to say something new,' (Schmidt, 1985, 162). The social theorist James Schmidt suggests that whilst in his lifetime Merleau-Ponty was allied with Saussure and Levi Strauss, after his death the structuralists placed him 'on the other side of the divide which separated them from phenomenology' (Schmidt 1985, 4). The Structuralists rounded on Merleau-Ponty for what they saw as his adherence to a humanism they were intent on overturning. Yet Schmidt points out that Merleau-Ponty himself called into question some of his early work, including The Phenomenology of Perception (1962) [1945], and in his later work struggled to re-articulate the relationship between subject and world. For Schmidt, Merleau-Ponty is seen to have been concerned with the relationship between agency and structure, a topic that in mainstream sociology only became prominent later in the twentieth century:

What has come to be called post-structuralism...thus faces a problem which is the mirror image of the one which confronted Merleau-Ponty. He was faced with the task of taming an excessively subjectivist theory with a knowledge of the opacity and density of the world of structures. Contemporary social theorists are faced with the task of overcoming an excessively objectivist understanding of structures with the knowledge that structures do not simply constrain agents, they also allow agents to act in ways which frequently lead to the transformation of the structures themselves.

Schmidt, 1985,166

In Eye and Mind (1961), the last essay published before his death, Merleau-Ponty seems to be arguing for artists' approaches to be considered as valuable alternatives to those of scientists. Merleau-Ponty contrasted modern scientific methods in which 'science manipulates things and gives up living in them' (Merleau-Ponty 1972, [1961] 55) with painters' responses to the visible world:

The painter lives in fascination. The actions most proper to him - those gestures, those paths which he alone can trace and which will be revelations to others...to him they seem to emanate from the things themselves...

Merleau-Ponty, 1972 [1961], 63

Contemplating the significance of the visible in relation to the painter's approach, Merleau-Ponty highlights the reciprocity of visibility in that 'my body simultaneously sees and is seen' (Merleau-Ponty 1972 [1961] 58) and suggests:

The eye is an instrument that moves itself, a means which invents its own ends; it is that which has been moved by some impact of the world'....

[painting] 'celebrates no other enigma but that of visibility'

Merleau-Ponty, 1972 [1961], 61

While he is careful to show he has taken into account he knows works of art are also products of specific cultures, Merleau-Ponty is not willing to sever humanity from a (potentially sharable) primordial connection with the world.

If dance is considered instead of painting it might be said, following Merleau-Ponty, that dance is always concerned with moving in the enigma of the visible.^{vi}

Visible and mobile, my body is a thing among things; it is caught in the fabric of the world, and its cohesion is that of a thing. But because it moves itself and sees, it holds things in a circle around itself. Things are an annex or prolongation of itself; they are incrustated into its flesh, they are part of its full definition; the world is made up of the same stuff as the body.

Merleau-Ponty 1972 [1961] 59

Such a view can be drawn on to consider (western) theatre dance as revelatory of the experience of moving in a world to which it is reciprocally related. In this way dance is infused by culture but this is not necessarily fully restrictive of the dancer's agency. With the perspective of over forty years of cultural change taking in the growth of culturally diverse perspectives, the challenge of poststructuralism to the stability of any interpretation and the (Foucauldian) equations of vision and knowledge with power, it will be recognised that the framework within which the relationship between artist and culture is understood has become more complex since Merleau-Ponty articulated what was essentially the modernist perspective in his account of art. However, by emphasising the reciprocity of individual and culture, Merleau-Ponty provides for an understanding of (western) theatre dance as a communicative phenomenon embodying what is an individual artist's

approach to moving in the world that at the same time is enmeshed within a culturally shared web of significance.

7.3 Democracies' Bodies

The idea that shared cultural values are embodied in dance has become part of the accepted narrative of the history of western dance. For example in terms of (western) theatre dance, it is generally agreed that the ballet d'action in challenging balletic convention began to distance itself from its origins in the aristocratic ballroom and perhaps 'the stage conventions that the dead hand of the court imposed' (Jonas, 1992, 155). Noverre, in his Lettres of 1760, accepted the division of dancers into three genres (grotesque, demi-caractère and heroic) that can be seen to reflect attitudes to class in the Eighteenth Century. However, his follower Dauberval can be viewed in his production of La Fille Mal Gardée (1789), two weeks prior to the start of the French Revolution, as ever so gently reflecting challenges to the class system by presenting a ballet with no aristocratic characters set in a rural idyll in which the plot centres around a couple performing in the demi-caractère genre (Guest, 1996, 384-386, Jonas 1992, 155). In the nineteenth century, as the Romantic ballet in Paris and London responded to the demands of theatre going, bourgeois audiences, the distinction between the genres was subsumed in the dual image of the Romantic ballerina. However, the hierarchy of corps, coryphées, ranks of soloists and finally principal or premier danseur that lasts in many ballet companies to this day may be seen to reflect the order of class and privilege in nineteenth century Europe. As Ramsay Burt (1998, 152-153) points out, twentieth century innovations in dance have been read against this background. In particular, Burt discusses Balanchine's Serenade (1934) in which, in the original, soloists emerged and returned to the corps and in which all the dancers performed, en masse,

steps often reserved for the soloist. This has been interpreted as Balanchine's turn away from the hierarchy of the Russian Imperial Ballet while continuing to explore the classical vocabulary. The choreographer is thus seen to have embraced (at least in this ballet) the democratic ideals of his adopted new American homeland in choreographic structure. Similarly, in the context of the modern dance, Burt discusses how Doris Humphrey's use of soloist and group in New Dance (1935) can be seen in a similar manner.

However, Burt offers a critique of this narrative of modernism, dance and democracy, pointing out that whilst both these works can be seen to respond to the democratic concerns of the time, they also may have marginalised views not taken into account. Not only does Burt address the problematic nature of the Balanchine ballerina (developing on from his previous (1995) account discussed in chapter six), but, in addition, whilst he credits Humphrey as conveying 'a greater sense of equality between the sexes' both she and Balanchine are seen as excluding the 'particularities of African American experience' from their 'universalising ideals' (Burt, 1998, 153).

It would be quite possible to argue against Burt's interpretations by presenting other possible readings. For instance, given the manner in which the matriarchal figure whips up the feelings of the community in Humphrey's With My Red Fires (1936), the New Dance Trilogy (1935/36) as a whole can be viewed as reacting against the anti inclusionary forces of fascism. Moreover, Siegel (1987, 155) relates Humphrey's use of soloist and group in New Dance to African dance. That Balanchine, in developing the academic style in ballets such as Agon (1957) borrowed 'from an African-rooted aesthetic' (Banes, 1998, 195) could be argued to reflect the more inclusive attitudes developing in his adoptive country. Further, his inclusion of the

African American dancer, Arthur Mitchell, in his company in the 1950s, a decade prior to the Civil Rights movement leading to legislation against race discrimination, can be interpreted as Balanchine's recognition of Mitchell as representative of 'a part of the American culture' (Hawley, 1999)^{vii}.

It is not Burt's prioritising one reading of a work over another that is problematic, but rather his tendency to present possible interpretations (ballerina as fetish object, for example) as if they are universally 'given'. Nonetheless, the value of his revisionist interpretation of modern dance works is to exemplify how what is stated about the values revealed in a dance work is open to variations in intertextual analysis (as discussed in chapter two). From this perspective what is seen as embodied is an interpretation in relation to stated textual references. Hence in the 'thirties, at a time when the ideals of democracy were viewed positively in stark contrast to the then spectre of fascism, and then later, after the second world war, when America took on the mantle of protector of democracy, the uses of groups, and the relation of the individual to the group, took on different meanings in American dance related to the ideals of democracy in opposition to first fascism and then communism. More recently as disenchantment with the 'American dream' coincides with poststructuralist critiques of the modernist project, 'textual' references from the later twentieth century draw attention to those viewpoints excluded from modern dance works whether due to ethnicity, age, ability or sexuality^{viii}.

'Revisionist' histories like Burt's may also lead to consideration that what some people experienced in the dance of a certain period is not necessarily articulated in 'key' critical texts written at the time. From a strictly structuralist (or social constructionist) perspective it could be argued that such

understandings would not have been available within the dominant discourses of the time. A different argument could be made that there was a conscious suppression of alternative discourses. However, it is also likely that some people's responses to dance performances, and even the artists' perceptions of the works they created, were shaped by factors of which they were not fully cognisant. This would entail individuals being tacitly aware of meanings not entertained within the dominant discourses of the time. For instance, Burt's discussion of the Balanchine Ballerina as a 'fetishized display of women dancing on point' (Burt, 153) relates to what might be termed the postmodern feminist discourse of dance academics of the late twentieth century. Articulating this perception now raises the spectre of the potential for her to have been appreciated in this regard, if by a very small number of people, while it was fashionable only to hail Balanchine's genius in choreographic form. Some people, aware of a subordinate discourse of suppressed desire, may have wisely decided, very consciously, to keep this to themselves. For others, was it possible that such a fascination with female form fuelled excitement over Balanchine of which they would not have consciously been fully aware at the time?

Similarly, while Burt tells us that left wing criticism of New Dance was in relation to its lack of apparent content, at a time when segregation, particularly in the southern states, caused problems for African Americans, surely some people must have been conscious of what was excluded from the Utopian ideal Humphrey envisaged in this work. Were others disappointed not to feel as elated by the performance of New Dance as they expected without understanding quite why, and perhaps blaming this on what they perceived as its lack of content?

The benefit of revisionist approaches to history is that they not only offer different perspectives than were stated at the time, if largely ignored, but also cause us to question the shadowy workings of the subconscious that may have shaped responses in the past. This in turn may lead to reflection of the extent to which audience members may exercise individual agency in responding to dance. Ultimately the workings of the subconscious in relation to other peoples' experiences, past or present, can never be proven, but revisionist accounts of history, by destabilising or 'deconstructing' popularly held assumptions about the significance of dance works in the past, may also lead us to question how dance is interpreted in the present.

Given the above, it is interesting that current dance is sometimes less subject to the scrutiny of deconstruction than might be expected. While Burt's revisionist considerations of gender and ethnicity have rather rubbed some of the shine off the perceived democratic values of modern dance (and modernist ballet), some forms associated with postmodern dance still seem to be presumed to be untarnished in relation to acceptance of their inherent democracy. That a book about the dance being made at Judson Church New York from the 1960s can be called Democracy's Body (Banes, 1983) suggests that in seeking to challenge traditional elitist ideas about technique and hierarchic approaches to choreographic structure and control, these new dance experiments were 'symptomatic' of the concerns and ideals of the time (Reynolds and McCormick, 2003, 394). Contact improvisation, for instance, grew out of the collectivist ideals of the dancers involved in the 'grand union' in America in the 1960s and 70s and comments may be quite often found that support the basic assumption proposed by Lucinda Jarrett that 'no other dance form espouses democracy and community based principles better than contact improvisation' (Jarrett, 1997/98,7).

Certainly contact improvisation in its development drew on a range of cultural sources. According to dance anthropologist and dancer Cynthia Novack, contact improvisation, at least in its early events, was characterized by a 'dynamic of interaction and sense of group participation' (1990, 73). The emphasis on improvisation lends itself to group responsibility for performance, while the skills of spatial awareness and the ability to respond sensitively to others can, with time, be developed whatever the practitioner's age, shape or ability. Such skills certainly fit happily with the ideals of interdependence and mutuality that mesh with the ideals of democracy and have been used effectively in community dance settings. Most notably the use and response to each other's weight has enabled disabled groups to dance. However, as Jarrett admits, presenting this dance form in theatre spaces seems to reveal similar pressures to the presentation of any other dance form. In this arena it can be argued that its purported democracy is undermined by the same pressures that affect (western) theatre dance generally. To dance it well in performance requires not only the experience and the skills mentioned above, but high levels of co-ordination and that elusive 'performance quality'. As to its being 'better' at espousing democracy than any other dance form, is it possible that as with modern dance a universalising tendency once again reveals a bias marginalising protagonists of so called 'folk', 'ethnic' or 'social' dance ?

Two black British artists of African Caribbean ethnicity interviewed for this study viewed all 'contemporary' dance forms (including contact improvisation) as strongly linked, in Britain, to groups who could be identified in relation to their high level of education. Could it be that the current emphasis in 'contemporary' dance institutions on creativity, interpersonal sensitivity,

physical development and bodily health, combined with knowledge about dance reflects attitudes that are class based? There is a correlation between income group and attendance in higher education (Connor, Tyers, Davis, Tackey, and Modood, 2003) that points to the likelihood that aspects of class might be related to approaches in higher education. While changes in society, in tandem with initiatives to make higher education more inclusive, have had a positive affect on the participation of both low income and minority ethnic groups in higher education in the UK (Leeds University, accessed 06.12.06) this growth has been marked since the 1980s, the era in which both these artists completed their education. Further, the indicators of lower rates of achievement/completion in higher education by black African and African Caribbean students (Connor, Tyers, Davis, Tackey, and Modood, 2003) suggests that when Artist B used the term 'college dance' (Artist B, 2003) to describe the style of choreography associated with dance in Higher Education it may indicate such dance may not be felt to be particularly relevant to British African Caribbean audiences. Or at least it is relevant to the relatively smaller proportion successfully participating in higher education. These factors hint at perceived associations between 'contemporary' dance, class and ethnicity which become problematic when universalist claims are made for 'contemporary' dance forms.

In relation to dance in America, Sally Banes notes that due to 'complex historical and political reasons, the aesthetic and social functions of the black dance movement diverged sharply from the predominantly white post-modern dance movement' (Banes, 1987, xx) but provides little by way of further explanation. Novack suggests concerns with equality, freedom and civil rights that were important to a large number of young Americans developing new forms of social dance, also influenced a smaller group exploring new ways of

making dance theatre in the 1960s. Yet the latter were predominantly white and seemed more interested in exploring movement and meditation traditions such as tai chi, aikido and yoga that came from Japan, China and India, than the more African American inspired beats that influenced rock and roll music and dance (Novack, 1990, 33-52). The writings of one group of postmodern dancers in America, the contact improvisers, in the periodical Contact Quarterly show an interest in, and awareness of, issues related to equality. In the publications between 1975 and 1992 there were many discussions (e.g. from Bryon Brown, 1997 [1977], Cynthia Novack, 1997 [1988] and Steve Paxton 1997 [1989]) of whether hidden, and not so hidden, hierarchies existed in the collective effort. One example, a report of a meeting in 1977, demonstrates concerns in relation to the high levels of participation amongst well educated white middle class Americans that is accounted for by a perceived lack of being 'in touch with their bodies' among this group. 'This is a white middle class trip and other people out of that might not necessarily want to have it' ('John' quoted by Brown, 1997 [1977], 19). If, following Burt's line of thought, the lack of an African American viewpoint undermined the extent to which much American modern dance might be said to embody democratic values, a similar argument could be made in relation to some 'contemporary' dance practices in America in the 'sixties. Where in London today the legacy of American postmodern dance experiments informs the more progressive higher education curricula in dance, it is still possible that a middle class, white viewpoint may be perceived to be prioritised.

However, the relationship between dance and the dynamics of political understanding should not be over simplified. This point is made by Steve Paxton, the man generally regarded as the originator of contact

improvisation. Commenting on an article by Novack, Paxton interrogates the assumption that contact improvisation is democratic.

Contact Improvisation could not have "embraced values of individualism, equality, and anti hierarchical relationships ", because CI cannot do anything. It is something to be done... If liberty and equality are chosen then at the moment of choice they exist. What happens the next moment is something for all of us, anthropologists especially, to ponder.

Paxton, 1997 [1989], 166-167

Actions in dance may be understood to embody the democratic ideals of those performing them, but, by virtue of context become caught up in the inequalities of society at large.

7.4 Cultural Diversity, Bodily Style and the Dancer's Image

The current trend towards 'hybridity', or the development of 'new ethnicities', that (as was discussed in chapter five) is popular with some of the younger generation of 'contemporary' dancers, suggests moves in some quarters to address the potential ethnocentrism of 'contemporary' dance. These developments place 'contemporary' dance in opposition to traditional dance forms that emphasise established movement vocabularies and choreographic structures over individualism, innovation and the negotiation of difference. In this way 'contemporary' dance could be viewed as embodying an outlook that, while dominant in the west, is at odds with traditional elements in both western and 'non western' cultures. As European and American artists draw on a range of influences, including 'non western' dance traditions, and begin to make links with artists from Egypt, Africa or Asia who share their interests in developing and 'fusing' forms, 'contemporary' dance may be seen to be morphing into a global phenomenon challenging bounded traditions.

The discussion of dance and diversity in London in chapter five revealed the artists' awareness of developments in dance outside the UK. From the audience's perspective, by drawing on a range of dance traditions artists may engender confusion amongst their audience as to how to appreciate them. For the critic for whom the question of how any evaluative comments are validated this may raise professional concerns. Whether based in London, Paris, New York or almost any major city in the 'developed' world, they are the ones likely to be put in a similar situation to the one the American critic Sally Banes describes:

...our beat includes the ballet, postmodern dance, recent hybrids of the two, modern dance, tap dance, jazz dance and musicals; it also includes breakdancing, capoeira, flamenco, wayang, kathak, ballroom dancing, parades, ice skating, processions. And when we cover an event like this week's Ethnic Dance Festival, we're expected to write about a panoply of traditions at a glance.

Banes, 1994, 22

Given this situation, Banes shows how the gap between ethnography and criticism narrows. In one particular instance she reports that she had found that in order to write about breakdancing (in 1980 while it was part of American subculture rather than mass entertainment) she had taken a quasi ethnographic approach feeling that 'a cultural context had to be limned in order to capture the sense of the dancing' (Banes 1994, 23). However, given that critics usually write about dance presented in the theatre (even if it has been uprooted from its original context to do so), the distinction, for Banes, lies in the critic's job being to work 'right inside the mainstream of our culture, and we write about events for other people inside our culture who share our expectations and values' (Banes 1994, 24). There is a presumption here that those people who buy the paper or dance journal she writes for are 'insiders' in terms of a mainstream culture. Yet in an era in which even banks boast their sensitivity to how cultural differences^{ix} affect the manner in which their business is carried out, an anthropological perspective in relation to dance may help understanding. In terms of London, rather than New York, if attempts to broaden the range of people attending theatres are successful, audiences (except for the tourists) may share some sort of generalised British culture but their cultural experiences shaped by class and ethnicity will be very varied. The erosion of boundaries between dance forms and the popularity of 'fusion' (for example contemporary African dance), leads to a

situation in which it may be hard to define just who are the 'insiders' for whom the critic writes.

Not surprisingly, given the complexities of culture, some of the artists were particularly sensitive to anthropological perspectives. Artist D perceived differences between European and American presentations of male dancers in 'contemporary' dance to be linked to the frontier heritage that shaped American ideals (Artist D, 2004). Anderson (2004) related different stylistic approaches to Egyptian dance to variations between American, British and Egyptian culture. Meanwhile the street dancers I talked to discussed how what they saw as an international phenomenon is influenced stylistically by local cultures, and Mehta, the kathak artist, looked to an American trained woman from India to bring a 'contemporary' dance influence to their collaborative project. Within such a context, some issues of choreographic style become closely related to issues of culture. In a city such as London, where the experience of cultural difference rather than that of uniformity has become the norm, variations in bodily styles may be understood in relation to cultural difference. Moreover, these are interwoven with attitudes to gender, class and sexuality. For example, Artist B, drawing on occasional high reaching, 'balletic' movements may be thought of as not only challenging definitions of black dance but black male machismo. For Anderson, the 'boss woman' role for women within Egyptian society allows for a questioning of definitions of male and female dance styles within Egyptian dance that in turn provides for her exploration of bodily styles that challenge expectations of black female identity.

In the past, a particular bodily way of being may have been taken for granted within a specific genre, at least until a radically new choreographic style was

presented. For instance, the abandonment of lightness and grace for a harsh, grounded, percussive dynamic in Nijinsky's Rite of Spring (1913) signalled a rupture within ballet that audiences clearly recognised and for some was a step too far on the path to modernise ballet and 'bid adieu to the Belle Epoque' (Garafola, 1992 [1989], 64). The norm for the deportment of ballet dancers (on and off stage), against which this break with tradition was judged however, was one of a grace and elegance that was an extension of what would have been appropriate in any polite drawing room in early twentieth century Europe. Nearly a century later, where norms in bodily styles vary in every day life, audiences are sensitised to the subtle (and not so subtle) aspects of differences in postural dynamics. What may be thought of as the 'bodily hexis' draws on Bourdieu's (1984) [1979] concept of 'habitus' that, may be considered to be shaped by class and, it has been argued, is also implicated in aspects of ethnicity, sexuality, and gender. This 'bodily hexis' may thus be thought of as a source of significance underlying more traditional aspects of choreographic style such as movement choices, formal structure and phrasing.

7.5 The Dancer's Image in Late Capitalism

This play on bodily differences within choreographic styles demands from audiences sensitivity to embodiment that may shift attention onto the bodily style of the dancer. This highlights how dance may be conceptualised as caught up within two other pressing concerns of postmodernity, image and capitalism. These are discussed by the sociologist Mike Featherstone (1991) [1982] who draws attention to how the body has been appropriated by capitalism through a concern with body image. In his account, the rise in the fitness and slimming industries are linked as much to developments in fashion and cosmetics as to those related to health: in a society in which it is

not enough to be healthy but to look it, looking good is important in order to market the self as a commodity:

Within consumer culture the body is proclaimed as a vehicle of pleasure: it's desirable and desiring and the closer the actual body approximates to the idealised images of youth, health, fitness and beauty the higher its exchange-value.

Featherstone, 1991 [1982], 177

Where the fitness and fashion industries meet in the desire for self fashioning, the physiological demands of dance styles can be marketed as being designed to 'sculpt' the body into the desired image. The success of the New York City Ballet Workout (Blanshard, 2000) exemplifies this. Created as a collaboration with the New York Sports Club by Peter Martins, whose performing image is associated with the heyday of New York City Ballet, this fitness video features what the online retailer Amazon describes as 'four gorgeous dancers (two bare midriffed women and two bare-chested men)' (Price 2006). The exercises they perform are a mixture of balletic exercise and more general body conditioning that are designed to be emulated by those who 'envy the ballet dancer's long, lean body and graceful elegant movements' (Price 2006). In contrast to fashion models, dancers need their usually young looking, streamlined, muscular bodies to do more than look fit if they are to dance at a professional level. Yet, judging by the success of the New York City Ballet's foray into the fitness industry which led to a second volume in 2003, it does seem that in addition to the effectiveness with which dancers meet the physiological demands of their art, the values attributed to the dancer's body relate to images of ideal bodily styles more generally. As

the boundaries between consumer culture and dance become blurred it may be that dance technique itself is developing in response to bodily ideals.

The resulting focus on the image of the dancer had affected the artists interviewed in different ways. For example Anderson had experienced rejection due to her size, whilst Artist D had felt hounded to put on weight. Neither felt this was actually related to concerns with their health, fitness or ability to perform the movements. This may be interpreted as relating to what Fredric Jameson has termed 'a whole new culture of the image or the simulacrum' (Jameson 1991, 58). A change in the relationship between image and value in postmodern or late capitalist western society reveals for him that: 'What has happened is that aesthetic production today has become integrated into commodity production generally' (Jameson 1991, 56). The arts have become just another commodity to be placed in a market economy that relies on needs that are artificially stimulated. For Jameson this has resulted in a disjunction in late capitalism in the relationship between image and actual usefulness. In the more extreme analysis of Jean Baudrillard this dislocation appears complete, severed by 'the endless unwrapping of images... which leaves images no other destiny than images' (Baudrillard, 1993 [1987] 195). In the terms of such theories, the image of the dancer, by becoming interwoven with the bodily images of contemporary western society, becomes valued as a commodity, their image potentially disassociated from the physical being of the dancer. It is not surprising then, that for dancers in the more 'established' dance sector in addition to actual physical ability, the right image or 'look' is also important, even, for some, becoming an end in itself.^x For the dancer, that control of his/her image is largely achieved through diet and training, the latter being integral to their development as dancers, makes for an uneasy relationship between the

dancer's sense of self and their awareness of their bodily value as a commodity in the market of dance companies.

Currently in London a visit to different dance schools and studios reveals the different image/value systems that are in operation. The young ballet dancer's svelte well groomed appearance, particularly for the women, suggests a respect for established values. The 'contemporary' dancers in their studiedly baggy, fading clothes are tuned into more cutting edge counter culture which nowadays is no less fashionable. West end, musical theatre dancers dress 'sexy' and street dancers draw on a more radical counter culture than the 'contemporary' dancers, relating strongly to black culture. These looks are closely related to the ideals of the different genres: correct lines and knowledge of her place in ballet's heritage for the aspiring ballerina provides a contrast to an understanding of a tradition of avant garde experiment for the would be next-to-new-thing on the 'contemporary' dance circuit. However, within the sweeping generalisations there are hybrids and plays on styles with ballet rebels taking on 'grunge'^{xi} and hip hop dancers dressing as if they were going for tea^{xii}. Significantly, clothes that facilitate ease of movement are a general priority. The bodily ideals, while broadly following the fashion for slimness also reveal differences in values: while ballet dancers will be the most disciplined into slimness, the female 'contemporary' dancer will demonstrate physically that her health requires a certain level of body fat and her equality is signalled by more evident upper body strength so that she can lift others as well as being lifted herself in partner work. A few curves, frowned on in ballet, may be an asset in the west end and a more evident muscularity is necessary for street dance battles, even for the women. The point is here not to catalogue the different bodily styles and identify their significance but to underline the significance of bodily

style per se and the relationship between bodily images on and off stage. The styles of different dance genres are interwoven with bodily images that can be interpreted in a wider social context. Hence the Balanchine ballerina can be viewed as embodying both the effects of patriarchy and the epic struggle of rational humanism. (Whether these two views have to coincide or whether rationalism could exist outside patriarchy is beyond the scope of this discussion.) Dance styles thus can be understood as embodying wider social values, although what is interpreted as being embodied is the result of interaction between viewer and viewed, public/audience and dancer and (where they are not the performer) choreographer.

Whatever the genre, or the cultural context of the dance, within current presentations of dance in London (and probably in western orientated theatres wherever they may be geographically) the 'look' can be very important in presenting work. As yet the dancer's image is ultimately grounded in a physical presence that demands skills from the dancer that equate to their only too real experience of class and rehearsal. However, in an age saturated by images, the popularity of work that draws on a range of media and technology to produce a profusion of images may be more commercially successful than those which focus on the quality and structural forms of dance movement. (The success of choreographer Matthew Bourne in crossing the divide between mid-scale 'contemporary' dance and west end theatre might serve to illustrate this.) In such a context dance artists searching for a means of communicating with audiences in modes that counteract the dominance of the visual may be interpreted as attempting to undermine the norms of late capitalism. Alternatively, artists who create performances with those not usually perceived as included within the dominant production of either capital or images, can also be interpreted as

challenging social and aesthetic norms. Featherstone (1991 [1982], 193) points to the old, unemployed and low paid as being those who are excluded, but by virtue of the latter category the disabled and some ethnic minorities may also belong to this group. Thus in Gaby Agis' use of older recreational dancers in some of her work (Agis, 2003) and Victoria Marks' Outside In (Arts Council, 1993) for Candoco, which starts with the focus on the dancer's heads sporting fashionably styled hair, or Carl Campbell's Recycled Teenagers dance group which encourages the use of 'funky' movements and clothing for older women (observed in dance concert at New Peckham Varieties, July 2002), disabled and older dancers are included within 'an economy of signs'. Their presence may not only be understood as signalling inclusive attitudes but as undermining the normalising ideals of conventional body images. However the terms of this inclusion are ones that accept the inevitability of the commoditisation of the self.

Here it might be expected that the role of funding agencies to protect the arts from the demands of market forces, could be important. In Britain, in contrast to America, state funding rather than business or charitable support is often a significant source of funding, even though organisations such as Arts and Business have been formed to increase the input from the private sector. From discussions it emerged that the artists seemed to have mixed attitudes to arts funding: Artist A, for example, having received a few project grants from London Arts (Now Arts Council of London), after a break from dance wanted to work on a solo without seeking external funding so that she did not feel pressured to meet a funding body's criteria (Artist A, 2007). Artist B, who had received a mix of funding from commercial and arts organisations was aware of the different demands of each (Artist B, 2006). Mehta was anxious to stress that her kathak based explorations using contemporary themes or

collaboration with a choreographer working in 'contemporary' dance had been motivated by personal concerns rather than the priorities of funding agencies (Mehta, 2003). Although without further research specifically focussed on the issues of funding it is not possible to draw definite conclusions, I gained the distinct impression that both commercial pressures and the demands of funding bodies were seen as reliant on different criteria to those sustaining the artists' visions of the direction for their art.

The artists might be considered as in a continuous process of negotiation with wider social pressures to which perhaps what can be seen as their common response (as discussed in chapter four) has been to play on audience's expectations, challenging their assumptions about what the dance artists might be perceived to embody: Artist B by switching from 'fun jazz', to serious physical theatre by way of the occasional lyrical solo is steadily refusing to be pigeonholed; Agis has played around with the glamorous image that in her youth was projected onto her; Anderson neither tries to fit the Raqs Sharki 'art' dance look or seems to want to fit the stereotype of the Egyptian belly dancer; Artist D seems to revel in audiences not being quite able to 'place' him and Mehta, seemingly comfortable in her presence as an older 'Indian' of lady like demeanour, happily dances alongside much younger dancers of a range of ethnicities. Body image, as Featherstone reveals, may have been appropriated by capitalism, but through their dancing the artists may be seen to embody their resistance to the culture within which they are enmeshed.

7.6 The Significance of the Virtuoso

All the above has implications for the interpretation of virtuosic skills. In the earlier stages of capitalism, the perceived virtuosic ability of the dancer was

an important part of their value to be promoted^{xiii}. Taglioni's pointes and Nijinsky's jump were special abilities that became entwined with the image of the dancer rooted in 'the real'. Virtuoso abilities were the preserve of the few and were an intrinsic element to the dancer as commodity. For the Diaghilev ballet, the value of dancers such as Nijinsky and Karsavina was such that their presence was often a contractual obligation for the company and they danced in nearly every programme (Garafola, 1989, 194). Elitism, in terms of individual dancers being valued for their unique abilities, is generally agreed to permeate theatre dance and indeed is so much part of dance training that it can make for tensions within community and youth dance organisations as they try to find a balance between providing opportunities for those with 'talent' to progress towards a potential professional dance career and widening participation^{xiv} (Tomkins, 2006, 33).

Virtuosity may be viewed as 'cultural capital' within the dance world. It emerged in discussion with Artist A that she acknowledged the importance of virtuosic skills in relation to dancers' perceptions of one another in that 'there is an element of wanting to be accepted by that fraternity, of them knowing that you have a right to be there' (Artist A, 2002). Even when watching work by companies that place emphasis on the emotional content of their work she still felt that 'their dancers are incredibly technically able and they are working very, very hard to put that over' (Artists A, 2002). This artist had noticed how this sometimes worked against choreographic intentions so that dancers may, for instance, raise their leg height to show what they can do even though the choreographer did not set high extensions. It could be said that virtuosity brings into consideration communication between dancers that sometimes is at odds with the choreographer's communicative intentions. (While for this study, this problem was largely circumvented by talking to those who danced

their own choreography, a wider issue is highlighted in the range of values shaping the perception of different audience members and how artists respond.)

In late capitalism the commodity value of the virtuosic is currently challenged in a number of ways: the digital age means a music or movie star who is an average dancer can seem to move faster, jump higher, turn repeatedly, even dance on the ceiling, that is, at least if it is on video; meanwhile for the live stage, in vying with others for soloist positions, dancers need to promote an image that will attract company directors and choreographers. That these latter themselves are concerned with promoting dance works to compete within the entertainment sector for audiences may implicate their choice of dancers within a framework that is as much economic as aesthetic. This may thus shift their concern towards 'image' over skill. To what degree skill is significant to the marketability of a dancer's image, and how much this balance may have changed is beyond the scope of this study. However the development of training techniques drawing on research into exercise physiology and learning is producing large numbers of proficient dancers. Where there is a choice between dancers who can meet all the technical and stylistic demands of the choreography, consideration of a 'marketable image' is likely to play a larger role in the final choice.

Beyond the mainstream, alternative dance practices such as contact improvisation and release technique focus attention less on image and overt virtuosity and more on the experience of moving. While contact improvisation focuses attention on the relationship between self:other, it shares common concerns with what are now loosely grouped together under the heading 'somatic body practices'. Increased kinaesthetic sensitivity underpins the

ability both to move with another dancer with a shared sense of weight and to minimise unnecessary tension in movement. Those involved in what is fast becoming an established alternative dance scene study contact improvisation, Skinner releasing, Feldenkrais or Body Mind Centring® in the search for a 'deeper kinaesthetic experience of movement' (Alexander, not dated). According to the dancer and educator Kirsty Alexander, this is set in opposition to 'the philosophy of "I think therefore I am" and the mind/body split it implies' (Alexander, not dated). In contrast to traditional dance techniques that depended on the unconscious retaining of 'overlearned' movement habits but extolled the instrumental relationship between conscious mind and body, Skinner releasing, for example, is portrayed as using images with which the student is encouraged to 'merge', experiencing them 'at a level just beyond our conscious control' so 'they become another reality' (Alexander, not dated).

Undeniably, such dance practices often seek to challenge the images of dance presented within large, commercially successful or well funded organisations. They thus often incorporate a wider range of people, including dancers who are older or who have less than 'ideal' physiques. Yet in the realms of 'professional performance' the more subtle self control that is demanded, with its emphasis on sensitivity, creativity and flow has a virtuosity all of its own, one that perhaps embodies the values of the liberal, well educated middle classes. Certainly skill in this dance form demands access to space and time in an environment in which the stresses of everyday life are kept at bay. The potential of dance performances in this form to resist commoditisation can be undermined by the glorification of the (physical) self awareness needed to perform with ease. This has been recognised by key postmodern dance artists themselves, summed up by Deborah Hay in the

phrase 'flow is show'^{xv}. Virtuosity, whether in this more subtle form or in the more traditional-higher-faster mode, when pulled into the dance mainstream becomes subservient to image. Within the dance practices emanating in Britain from New Dance there may thus be seen a distinction between those that substitute a visual aesthetic of sensitivity for previous more virtuosic and glamorous images and those that continually 'deconstruct' the images they create. Artist D's exploration of awkwardness in a dance duet might be viewed in this light, particularly since he is adept at performing the kind of seamless flow of subtle movement demanded in current 'alternative' dance practice (observation of work made in 2004). However Artist A on reading this considered that such 'deconstruction' would not be popular with arts funding agencies and promoters (Artist A, 2007).

The challenge to notions of elitism in dance tied to a narrow prescription of physical excellence has informed the desire for the 'democratic', often drawing on the newer, alternative techniques discussed above, and celebrating the integration of a wide range of physicality and ability. One such example might be the company Candoco, whose performances integrate disabled dancers. What is interesting here is that in some ways it is the disabled dancers who shine by virtue of their difference. In this company, which embodies the ideal of 'equal but different' in relation to ability, there may still be tensions in terms of the sense of the group as a whole, not least because the audience tend to focus on certain dancers. One of the original co-directors, Adam Benjamin, recognised that dance accessible to disabled performers and concerned with how to foster integrated work does not equate with a lack of virtuosity. Rather, the same issues are raised. For him, 'the tension that exists between virtuosity and communality will not go away' (Benjamin, 2002, 40). In the choreographic approach to the use of different

skills and abilities, (western) theatre dance can be seen to embody the dialectical relationship of individual and society. What the work of Candoco highlights is the change in postmodernity from an elitism defined within narrow constraints to one that allows for a broader range of what is considered excellent.

Despite people's egalitarian intentions, the problem of the virtuosic is always resurfacing. Within the field of contact improvisation, the dancer Karen Nelson's response to the question of the 'allure' of gymnastic skills was to point out that "...everyone loves and marvels at the ability of gymnasts... Maybe it stimulates childhood memories" (Nelson, 1997 [1989], 137). In considering virtuosity it may also be important to consider the phenomenological experience of twirling, leaping and balancing that most children love. Reflecting on how these movements, recognisable in children as expressions of the enjoyment of physicality, become developed as commodities in dance may reveal the extent to which physical being has become implicated in capitalism.

Ironically in relation to the above, virtuosity in its more overt form, by emphasising the physicality of the dancer challenging her/himself to the limits, in sweat and effort, may also serve to shatter the smooth veneer of the marketable image. Some awareness of this seemed to surface in discussion with Artist B (2005), whose work I have watched develop over time. He acknowledged how a 'rawness' was lost as a virtuosic work, which drew on skills used in 'dance offs' in clubs, was performed in more established venues. This can be considered as recognising how the 'quality' of his work had developed to meet the 'production values' of larger dance venues. Yet, another interpretation is that as the work became more absorbed into the

'market' of mainstream dance, the dancers lost a little of that 'connection' with their experience of dance in clubs, the raw edges of their 'real' movement being smoothed off to form signifiers more suited to the promotion of dance within the discourse of theatre. The athletic virtuosic may be implicated in the competitive spirit of capitalism but it is not always a signifier of (high) cultural elitism until subsumed into the discursive practices that currently seem dominant.

7.7 New Dance Style and the Embodiment of 'Lack'

What might be seen as a fashion for somatic sensitivity is part of a tradition in American and European modern dance reaching at least as far back as to artists such as Isadora Duncan and late nineteenth century movement theories such as those of François Delsarte. Freeing the body from the rigid forms of established dance techniques and social conventions has been the rallying cry for those promoting movement that is more 'natural' since at least the late nineteenth century. Moreover, as was discussed in chapter three, within balletic tradition, the mid eighteenth century 'reforms' of Noverre and the ballet masters of the ballet d'action can also be interpreted as the reaction against the strictures of culture and an assertion of the significance of the 'natural'. Current somatic practices have their roots in the cultural climate of the 1960s. The general problematisation of the assumptions that had underpinned the dominant white, male, Christian and rationalist viewpoint provided a suitable climate in which to re examine the relationship between dualisms such as body:mind, male:female, self:other, in addition to nature:culture. Prior to the 1960s, naturalism in western forms of theatre dance tended to look back to a 'lost' past. All too often the 'natural' was equated with the 'primitive' that was understood still to exist in the dances of 'other', 'non western' societies. Whether they were concerned with

rejuvenating ballet or developing modern dance, the distant past and the exotic provided a source of inspiration from Noverre to Fokine, to St Denis and Duncan^{xvi}. As their counterparts in the 1960s took up tai chi and aikido, this same fascination with ways of moving not rooted in western attitudes to 'being' may be observed.

However, the generation after two world wars and the atom bomb may be thought of as recognising a lack in western culture that might be present in 'other' cultures not by virtue of their relative primitivism but their different development. The need to retrieve what is felt to be lacked fixed not only on other cultures but on evolutionary development. Body Mind Centring © exemplifies this concern with the primitive in relation to each individual's make up. For example, a manual to support workshops in this technique states:

As we recapitulate the inherited or evolved development movement patterns, we experience with clarity our own personal development process and our deviations or inhibitions of the natural (inherited) process.

And

Brain structures near the base represent an early ascent on the scale of evolution. Parts of the brain stem are responsible for eliciting stereotyped patterns of motion, e.g. swimming, and can be elicited as primitive reflex patterns in man.

Allison, Bainbridge Cohen and White, 1984, 3

The authors of the manual are clear that primitive motor patterns underlie all current movement patterns. During a workshop that drew on Body Mind Centring © techniques led by K.J. Holmes (Independent Dance at Siobhan Davies Dance Studio, August 2006), I observed how references to primitive

movements are used as a source of movement investigation. From the basis of my observations the exercises given were successful in helping the participants find ways of moving that stripped away some of the culturally conditioned accretions that beset dancers and resulted in a heightening of intuition in their movement responses to the environment and to others. A series of movement investigations were presented that drew on the idea of basic neurological patterning. Exercises proposed a sense of evolving from the prevertebrate stage in the 'ocean' of the womb to two footed habitual movement. This left me with a question that I was unable to resolve: was what I witnessed the 'releasing of the memory in the muscles' retrieving neurological connections to movement patterns from the earliest days of growth? Alternatively, was the power of such imagery successful in breaking down movement habits and allowing the unconscious to be drawn on to create movement less adulterated by culturally learned habits without necessarily this unconscious being able to draw on patterns from a prenatal stage of development? Resolving this is beyond the scope of this study, and while of interest^{xvii} is irrelevant to the success of the technique in engendering the movement effects in dancers. More important is what is understood to be the significance of the sense of a lost primitive that such effort is required to retrieve.

The traditional dualism of nature:culture may be seen to be embodied with (western) theatre dance in the tension between recognisably culturally conditioned patterns and movement that appears to draw on a more 'organic' source. It is very likely that this latter depends on the dancer being able in some way to draw on those bodily movements not usually under conscious control. Yet it is in the play between conscious and unconscious that the distinctions between different manifestations of the 'natural' are embodied in

dance. As a dancer in ballet class, I remember working to capture the moment when I knew the body's reflex responses would make a 'natural' movement reaction occur and then seeking to control the after effect so as to give a more 'natural' flow to my classical technique. Isadora Duncan, rejecting ballet, described herself standing awaiting the motivation to move to emerge from her solar plexus (Duncan, 1927, 75). She then had to capture that 'natural' urge and translate it into a performative act that, more or less, could be replicated at different performances.

Manifestations of the natural in dance have varied from Noverre to Fokine, from Karsavina's 'flow of movement' to girls in 'Greek' tunics skipping on the lawns of Denishawn, to the BMC© inspired dance explorations I witnessed in K.J. Holmes' summer workshop. Whether or not at some basic level there is a shared 'natural' pattern to human movement, in the bringing it into dance motility is culturally ensnared. In contemplating differences between manifestations of the 'natural' in dance, it is probably more fruitful to consider the cultural differences that account for them than to search for which is more authentically natural. For instance if the different approaches to controlling the body in ballet and 'release' techniques are considered, the former in emphasising the 'instrumental' control of the body to achieve spatial and temporal precision according to a particular aesthetic can be seen to relate to a cultural view drawn from European rationalism. In the traditional ballet class, the emphasis on the all seeing eye of the teacher illustrates the concept of panopticism. The latter in its attitude to the organisation of space and time can be seen in opposition to the rationalist tradition and, in contrast to the ballet class, seems to offer more freedom. Yet, the shifting of the dancers' attention to monitoring of their own 'inner' stimulus for moving, may

also be seen to correlate to a Foucauldian vision of the carceral society in which the desired norms have become internalised.

A salutary reminder of the cultural attitudes that shape understanding of the 'natural' is the attitude of Nina Anderson to some alternative 'contemporary' dance practices. Intellectually and experientially informed of the primitivist presumptions the west have made about black bodies and, conversely, perhaps not as inculcated with a consciousness of lack in relation to the 'natural', this British born artist of African Caribbean parentage seemed to me to enjoy a slightly ironic attitude to the earnestness with which her white, liberally educated, middle class counterparts attempted to regain a sense of the (lost) 'natural'. This attitude however is not universal amongst dancers from ethnic minorities; indeed, Artist D, excels in these alternative dance practices, using them not only in performance but also drawing on them in his teaching. However, he is recognisably one of a limited number of those from ethnic minorities in this field. Meanwhile, Artist B seemed to suggest that for his work he needed dancers with a sensitivity in movement terms, a sense of 'connection' with themselves that in some ways paralleled the concerns of the alternative 'contemporary' dance practitioners. Stylistically this artist found much 'contemporary' dance to be 'too soft', which, with its emphasis on 'nice shapes and patterns', made it lack the relationship to everyday life that he felt was important for some black audiences. However while stylistically his work is very different from those exploring alternative 'contemporary' dance forms, he shares a commitment to improvisation in performance that demands a similarly enhanced ability to draw on intuition in the moment. For him, this is an ability that comes from his roots dancing in clubs; in order to retain it, he considered it had been important to keep dancing in clubs while he attended formal dance training believing '... if you don't go back to where you came

from you will lose it and you forget how to improvise' (Artist B, 2003). In this belief this artist might be seen to share in the assumption that bodily sensitivity and responsiveness is a valuable skill that can be threatened by aspects of western culture.

If the tension between virtuosic technique and 'natural' expression marked the earlier development of theatre dance in the west, in current practices this has mutated into a virtuoso organicism and embodied sensitivity. While the more traditional 'fireworks' virtuosity is still recognised as a crowd pleaser and requiring hard won athleticism, the dancers themselves often seemed to me to value subtler skills. Even artist A, who recognised the need to show other dancers she could perform overtly technically difficult movement, respected the achievement of a certain quality in performance:

... and I think that that's really more what technique should be about , the quality of movement - There are people who just take your breath away in the way they move and they can just be walking - Its nothing to do with have they got their leg by their ear, its just the quality of the movement they have and that's really hard to put your finger on - but it is a technical thing that they have and it takes the movement into another realm.

...for me, performers imbue the movement with some kind of meaning that they bring something of themselves into the performance. And they are the kind of performers that I like to watch.

Artist A, 2002

In contrast, Artist B (2005) seemed frustrated with those dance audiences, who, more accustomed to 'contemporary' dance, could not see the subtleties in his dance and so focussed on the virtuosic tricks. In order for embodied sensitivity to be communicable it demands audiences with the perceptual abilities to see it, something that may be harder cross culturally.

7.8 Agency and the Dancer's Image

Bringing Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology into play with a poststructuralist understanding of the shifting sands upon which cultural significances are continuously constructed, dissolved and reconstituted may allow for an approach to dance that marries that very 'real' sense of physicality with recognition of the instability of the images dance creates. Thus what is perceived as embodied in dance is located within the play between 'real': 'imaginary', flesh: culture. In approaching (western) theatre dance as a communicative phenomenon, dancers and audience may be thought of as negotiating bodily significances. In this context how dance skills and styles are displayed within choreography can be interpreted as embodying attitudes to wider debates.

For example, as discussed in chapter two, Sherril Dodds' (1999) discussion of the Cholmondleys' play on image in relation to Jameson's account of the 'death of the subject' provides an example of how embodiment is approached within an intertextual (semiotic) analysis. Dodds raises the question of whether, by drawing attention to style as constructed, the choreographer Lea Anderson presents the loss of the autonomous bourgeois self under a welter of transposable images. An alternative intertextual reading, different to the one that draws on Jameson, is offered that focuses attention on each dancer's individuality. Dodds concludes that such individualism is superficial in preference for an analysis that refers to Jameson's text. However, an analysis that brings into play a phenomenological experience of the dance performance with such intertextual reflection might lead to an understanding of how the reciprocal relationship between individual experience and socially constructed styles of being is embodied throughout a range of Anderson's

work^{xviii}. Bringing semiotics into play with the phenomenological experience of the dance itself might be one way of ensuring dance analysis addresses the complexity of the relationship between individual and society which can be understood to be embodied in dance. Within this framework, the artist's agency in setting their work in dialectical tension with what are considered norms of both dance and the wider society may be understood.

Within alternative 'contemporary' dance practices a current concern with a new corporeality that is interpreted as a (re-)connection with a (lost) natural and innate human capacity for movement may be thought to reflect the concerns of a predominantly white, well educated group concerned with the legacy of modernity. In particular, by developing alternatives to a more 'mainstream' dance practice they may be considered as focussing on the agency of the individual performer. When alternative 'somatic' dance practices are linked with contact improvisation the reinforcing of interpersonal sensitivity may also draw on the concern to actively seek 'copresent interaction' (Friedland and Boden, 1994) that was discussed in chapter four.

A sense that in some way, common evolutionary and/or developmental movement patterns underpin what is culturally learned and are perhaps retrievable may reflect concerns about the over emphasis on difference in culturally diverse societies. However, there seems to be a presumption that it is white, middle class educated dancers who have to work harder at this retrieval that for the present seems to be inhibiting cross cultural exploration of this in dance terms.

What the artists I talked with share, however, is their commitment to dance as a communicative interaction within society. This serves to emphasise that

analysis of the dance image without consideration of the phenomenological experience of the performance undermines the significance of the individual agency of the performer. For the 'non aligned artists', working in some ways at a critical distance from established dance companies, the different ways in which their dance negotiated bodily significance was an important aspect of their choreographic style in performance. Understanding their performances as in some ways continually questioning, sometimes resisting, current norms of bodily image is, in different ways, important to appreciating their work. For example, as has been discussed, Artists B and D may seem to have very different concerns in relation to dance; Artist D excels in the subtle, bodily aware movement that is considered as an alternative to the virtuosic display of idealised bodies in more mainstream dance; Artist B draws on a range of virtuosic moves from his experience of dance in clubs combined with elements of other dance forms and physical theatre. However, both Artist D's exploration of awkwardness and Artist B's determination not to lose the connection between his dance and what he sees as the 'real' life experiences of black British people may be seen as equally determined attempts to keep hold of something recognisable as 'integrity'. What might be understood as a sense of honesty in the moment within the communicative phenomenon of a dance, on reflection, appeared to me as an important quality embodied in the dancing of the artists I had approached to participate in the research. While such an interpretation is hard to evidence, referring back to Goffman's (1969) [1956] research suggests the skills such understanding demands are often required in communicative interactions:

Underlying all social interactions there seems to be a fundamental dialectic. When one individual enters the presence of others, he will want to discover the facts of the situation.

Goffman, 1969 [1956], 241

The less that is known about a social situation the more people rely on their skills in judging people's actions. If dance is viewed as a communicative phenomenon, perceiving the artist as pursuing integrity in their part of the interaction may thus be considered to be important. Whether this understanding of integrity in the moment of performative interaction is more widely understood as important, is something only further research might reveal. However, since Goffman made his comments on 'the presentation of self', social situations have perhaps become more complex: it could be argued that currently for many people living in London, the experience of increasing diversity, the global separation of families and communities, changes to established rules of behaviour pertaining to notions of 'class' and the prioritising of digital above face to face communication may all contribute to limiting the daily experience of successful 'contact' with other people. In such a context, and given current disenchantment with media 'spin', it would not be surprising to find some people prioritising the potential of an art form to offer a sense of 'honest' engagement with others. Notwithstanding the difficulties of understanding dances that draw on traditions and bodily conventions different to my own, what is interesting to contemplate is how within a fragmented, yet interconnected, culture of theatre dance, the experience of living and working in twenty first century London might engender shared understandings that seem to emerge across more obvious cultural differences.

Notes to Chapter Seven

ⁱ See 4.4 pp.158-61.

ⁱⁱ A summary of Jakobson's terms is to be found in chapter 2, p.87.

ⁱⁱⁱ This Preston Dunlop discusses as 'performative'.

^{iv} While there might be some argument as to the precise definition and hence dates of the era of modern dance, in a general sense I mean to refer by this term to those artists working in (western) theatre dance in the first half of the twentieth century who developed their own new traditions that provided alternatives to ballet. Their relationship to aesthetic modernism, is a subject of debate (Franko, 1995, Copeland, 2000). Hence a modernist aesthetic as formulated by Greenberg might not best describe all (historic) modern dance and may even be used to describe some developments in ballet that focussed on the potentialities of the medium.

^v Research indicates this may be a matter of those with higher levels of status and or education being omnivorous in cultural consumption.

^{vi} Whilst he was acutely aware of the relationship between seeing and moving, Merleau-Ponty maintained the distinction between the tactile and visual sense: 'we do not need a 'muscular sense' in order to possess the voluminosity of the world' (Merleau-Ponty, 1972[1961] 62).

^{vii} Banes provides evidence that Balanchine's interest was in the purely visual aesthetic effect of contrasting skin tones. Yet the initial plans for the development of an American Ballet company point to some concerns to be 'racially inclusive' (Banes, 1998, 268).

^{viii} Recent interest in the perceived links between homosexuality and alleged communism which were pursued in the HUAC hearings, pre Stonewall, may also be significant.

^{ix} See the advertisements for HSBC c. 2000-2006 which made much of the Bank's knowledge of local customs in locations in which it operates around the world.

^x The incidents I have witnessed of dancers affected by anorexia to the extent they do not have the strength to meet the actual physical demands of dance technique might be explored from this perspective.

^{xi} See the photo of Sylvie Guillem with Russell Maliphant to advertise their performance at Sadlers' Wells September, 2005 on the front of the programme for that season, revealing Guillem in a shabby, long, dingy coloured coat with long straggly hair and no or little make up.

^{xii} I was fascinated to see a top hip hop group dressed in neat shirts and trousers at X'posure event, Brixton Recreation Centre, Summer 2004

^{xiii} Featherstone, citing Hess and Nochlin (1973), suggest theatrical publicity pictures (and with them the star system) started in 1890, but the lithographs of the Romantic Ballet surely also served to sell an image to the new bourgeois theatre goers of the Industrial Revolution.

^{xiv} This also relates to my own experience of developing a dance programme within adult education.

^{xv} This comment was made by the American postmodern dance artist, Deborah Hay, in a week long choreographic/performance workshop in Amsterdam (Summer 1995). What I understood was that Hay was encouraging deeper reflection on what movement signified.

^{xvi} Andrée Grau, (1992), provides a more detailed discussion of the relationship between western artists and 'the arts of "others"'.

^{xvii} For instance it could be explored in relation to Julia Kristeva's approach to the transition in early childhood development into the 'symbolic'.

^{xviii} One of my students for example commented on the bar stools section in *Double Take* (2005) that she imagined the performers as imprisoned in their (constructed) identity finding the women taking what were originally men's roles as making her reflect on how men experienced their gendered identity.

Conclusion

In the previous chapters I have argued for an approach to appreciating (western) theatre dance as a communicative phenomenon that brings into play semiotic analysis of the dance as 'read', with the phenomenological experience of dance in performance. At the intersection of self and world, dance artist and audience interact within a space that, wrought by a network of conventions, is yet susceptible to the occasional ruptures that are the product of the creative imagination. In the current context of the cultural changes that frame daily life in London (and many other cities), dance skills and styles can be experienced in performance as the negotiation of embodied significances. Even the different theoretical constructs of consciousness can themselves be experienced as embodied in different dance practices.

From consideration of the context within which the works of the dance artists are appreciated, it has been suggested that, in spite of arguments to the contrary, there remains an implicit assumption that for (western) theatre dance to be valued as art it is considered at least potentially likely to be aesthetically pleasing. The dualism inherent within western aesthetics that is problematic for an embodied art form has become intermeshed with the historic development of ballet and European and American modern dance. Those dance forms not emanating from a western experience of embodiment stand in a different relationship to traditional western notions of the aesthetic and this can have implications for the values attributed to them when presented in the theatres of a European city such as London. However, a current focus in this arena on a phenomenological orientation to the

embodied experience of dance suggests shifts in the appreciation of dance that have the potential to allow for different manifestations of the aesthetic.

The formulation of this argument has been based on the bringing of my own experiences and reflections into play with those of 'non aligned' dance artists based in London and the interdisciplinary study of how what is understood as embodied in dance might be related to its appreciation. Chapter one considered the development of the research method and recognised its relationship to the findings. This emphasised that the argument put forward is not presented as an unadulterated rational 'truth' but as the result of contemplation of particular views and experiences and is thus pertinent to them.

In chapter two, in an exploration of the relationship between what is understood to be embodied and the appreciation of dance, consideration was given to the philosopher David Best's (1973) warning that 'embodiment' may be used to gloss over a dualist position. Given the legacy of the expressionist influence on the development of both American and European modern dance and, in Fokine's symbolist variant (Garafola 1989), on ballet, it is important to recognise the lasting impact of what Best terms 'traditional expression theory' on these dance forms. Heed has been taken of Best's assertion that recognising what a dance expresses is an interpretation dependent on a cultural context rather than an intuition of significance that is reliant on some metaphysical connection of movement with meaning. However, while Best focuses on reasons for interpreting dance, drawing on the comments of the philosopher Graham McFee (2001), it is argued that 'understanding' might better account for how the work is experienced as meaningful without it always being easy to translate what is meant into words. Adapting Best's

arguments, the significance of the specific and broader cultural context to the interpretative act of 'seeing as' is considered important to understanding what is embodied. Accepting that intuition also operates within a cultural context (contrary to Best's suspicion of it) allows for contemplation of the role of the unconscious and the 'unsaid' in understanding what is embodied in dance.

The discussions of semiotics in chapters two, and later in chapter seven, offer some insights into how significance might be viewed as embodied from structuralist and poststructuralist perspectives. The dance anthropologist Drid Williams' structuralist semasiology provides for how structural universals (often dualisms such as up:down, right:left, inner:outer) can, within a given social context, be understood to carry value. The use of Roman Jakobson's structuralist analysis of (linguistic) communicative functions may also be drawn on in relation to (western) theatre dance to consider how the poetic function, which, following Jakobson, would be dominant in dance presented as art, might be thought of as interwoven with other communicative functions. In this model of analysis, the significance of dance is drawn from the play between the poetic and the accessory functions. Consideration of how Jakobson's poetics have been developed in relation to dance leads to discussion of how they have been given a poststructuralist slant in an opening out of the referential and conative functions. Henrietta Bannerman's discussion (drawing on Barthe's terminology) of how connotative significances change in relation to context are also viewed as bridging between structuralist and poststructuralist approaches to dance.

In further consideration of poststructuralism the concept of intertextuality has been explored. Whilst in the work of the literary theorist Julia Kristeva and that of her doctoral supervisor and colleague Roland Barthes, this seems to

celebrate the potential of texts to give rise to multiple interpretations; in a less radical form, such as described by Umberto Eco, the role of the reader is limited by the text itself. Eco's approach seems to have influenced that of Janet Adshead's (1999) approach to intertextuality in relation to dance. While in some respects she displays an indeterminate view as to the extent to which interpretation should be circumscribed, she tends towards agreeing with Eco that it is the text itself that should be prioritised although she recognises the audience's role in the construction of dance as text. In the approaches to intertextuality that Adshead's collection offers, what is understood as embodied may appear at times to be overly dependent on a rather disembodied act of relating interpretation to (inter)textual written references. The manner in which, for Kristeva, intertextuality is interwoven into the relationship between consciousness and the unconscious is sidestepped in Adshead's account, thus losing a sense of the potentiality for creative ruptures to incorporate the lingering manifestations of preverbal experience.

Consideration of Kristevian intertextuality would necessitate a foray into the realms of the unconscious in psychoanalytic terms that is beyond the scope of this project. Rather this study, particularly in chapters four and seven, has reflected upon the play between the semiotic and the phenomenological. The earlier of these chapters focussed on the extent to which the creative processes of making dance may seem to lend themselves to this interplay. For those artists creating work on themselves, the Janus-like sense of being both embodied in the experience of their dance whilst creating themselves as a signifying object for others highlighted the sense of reciprocity intrinsic to dance as a (western) cultural phenomenon. In the later chapter, drawing on Merleau-Ponty provides for an understanding of (western) theatre dance as a

communicative phenomenon that is both culturally ensnared and embodying of the individual artist's approach to being in the world. For the audience, 'reflecting back' on the phenomenological experience of dance may bring to attention both the elements perceived in the dance and the broader cultural concerns shaping that perception. In this manner, understanding is intrinsically bound with appreciating the phenomenon of the dance itself and not linked to those textual references that, rather than illuminating, may seem to be bolted on to 'readings' of the dance without necessarily reflecting back on the immediate and sensuous engagement with the dance for itself.

A distinction may be made between resorting to external references and, following the discussion of Rowell (2003) regarding Crowther (1993), the appreciation of aesthetic ideas as embodied in dance. Thus, as Rowell discusses in relation to the 'Waltz of the Snowflakes' scene of Morris' The Hard Nut (1991), engagement with the dance draws on previous experience and understanding of both social and dance values to suggest a re-evaluation of those values. The enjoyment of the humour of 'large men in pointe shoes and tutus fully committed to the ballet aesthetic' (Rowell, 2003, 191) may open up an aesthetic response to the play on traditional dance hierarchies and normative representations of gender to enrich appreciation of the dance. The sociological and anthropological accounts of embodiment discussed in chapter three suggest that intermeshed with the embodiment of aesthetic ideas is a cultural embodiment in which the bodily hexis, subtleties of posture and action structured into temporal and spatial relations, are part of that 'feel for the game' which the sociologist Bourdieu described as the habitus and by which important aspects of culturally specific ways of thinking and feeling are conveyed. Hence the habitus informs perception of the

manner in which Morris is able to play with issues of gender and tradition which, within the dance ecology, may affect appreciation of future ballets.

The discussion of Bourdieu's concept of habitus raises the possibility that aesthetic appreciation may itself be thought of as part of the habitus of a particular cultural group, the distancing process being intertwined with the concept of (western) civilisation. This may perhaps account for what Bourdieu (1979, 66) discusses as the difference between those born into elite groups, who seem to inherit the inclination to appreciate the aesthetic values in what, in spite of contemporary threats to its status, is considered to be 'high' culture, and those whose appreciative strategies are acquired through more formal studies. What it is important to recognise here is that the perceptual skills informing understanding are still learned even when they are absorbed as a 'way of being' rather than inculcated through the more conscious tasks of education or pursuing personal interests.

The cultural complexity of a capital city in postmodernity makes it extremely likely that dances presented in London will often emanate, at least in part, from a different culture than that of the spectator. Relying solely on the habitus of a particular group to guide understanding is thus likely to limit appreciation. For example the ability to take an 'aesthetic attitude' might be thought to be linked to certain aspects of culture and class. Such an approach would allow for enjoyment of the structural elegance and complexity of approach to ballet's traditions in a Balanchine work unfettered by concerns about social control or gender issues (even though I would argue a fuller engagement might be more rewarding). Yet, approaching an Egyptian dance concert 'at a distance' in this manner, while others responded bodily by clapping and voicing approval, would lead to missing an important

aspect of engaging with the work. This could still be the case however much the spectator might have 'read up' about the dance and musical forms in order to interpret the dance. Similarly, as Jordan and Thomas (1998) suggest in their criticism of Anne Daly's critique as overly concerned with specific denotative aspects of The Four Temperaments (1946), only focussing on gender relations in a Balanchine ballet will not help to appreciate fully the choreographic complexity of the work. Recognising that in appreciating art the spectator enters into a reciprocal relationship with the work suggests that not only their particular viewpoint, but their means of approaching the work, affects what they experience.

At a time when diversity is a fact not only in terms of culture but in the ways in which gender, class, sexuality, age and ability can be experienced within different cultures, relying on the perceptual habits and understandings pertaining to an individual's personal background (however privileged) may only take the spectator so far in understanding and appreciating a dance. The experiences of the London based artists explored in chapter five revealed the complexities of cultural diversity in relation to the context in which dance is understood with reference to both local and global cultural issues. In relation to the appreciation of dance that draws on 'different' cultural experience, what an emphasis on the interplay between the semiotic and phenomenological experience of dance suggests is that whilst finding out about 'other' cultures can be helpful, so can a willingness to enter into the world of the work with imagination and sensitivity. The role of the imagination in the aesthetic not only allows for the unbounded play of cognitive faculties, but in a more fully embodied phenomenological engagement, as argued by Merleau-Ponty, allows for a sense of a different way of being. In chapter three the role of the imagination in drawing on experience to make sense of a different way of

being is offered as a rather more prosaic explanation of the experience of 'communing' with the dancer that is of importance to dancers themselves. Here it was emphasised that this does not necessarily mean that the spectator has insight into the unique and specific significance of the dance, whether cultural or of artistic intent, but what is perhaps experienced is a communicative interaction between humans that attempts to fill in the blanks.

Reflecting back (in the phenomenological sense) on that experience as deeply as possible allows for discussion of what underpins the appreciation of a dance that brings the discussion into the realms of semiotics. As much as spectators may try to engage with different ways of being, in a diverse society this is unlikely to lead to complete agreement about what is embodied. If following Crowther's ecological approach to art, efforts are to be made to share considerations of what lies behind aesthetic judgements, then consideration of what is perceived as embodied in the dance becomes an important element of that discussion. In addition, recognition of the reciprocity of the subject:object relationship proposed by Crowther suggests further considering the roles in this relationship in dance. This may lead to reflection on the embodied act of aesthetic engagement as itself dependent on the reciprocity of culturally enmeshed interactions.

Those western traditions that have stressed the detached, disinterested, enjoyment of formal qualities prioritise a cognitive form of appreciation. This is not unrelated to the dualist legacy that prioritises mind over body. As was discussed in chapter six this has been problematic for those dance traditions emanating from the west that have been presented as art. In their development they may be thought to have embodied dualist dialectics in a manner that audiences may understand prioritises the aesthetic. (In

Jakobson's terms this would mean the domination of the poetic function over the referential and expressive.)

In the past the worryingly bodily aspects of dance (from a rationalist, Christian perspective) have perhaps been appreciated as controlled in a particular manner: ballet may allow for the sensuous pleasure of the 'male gaze', but the perceived control of sexual desire, subsumed under the domination of the aesthetic, has perhaps underpinned ballets appreciated for their artistic merits. The development of American and European modern dance in the twentieth century offered new female and male embodiments in the context of changing attitudes to sexuality and gender roles. However, as discussed in chapter six in relation to the later developments of contact improvisation, there may still be aspects of physical control embodied in what are seemingly 'freer' approaches that relate to newer constructions of bodily and sexual politics. While new forms of dance emanating from the west have sought inspiration from 'non western' approaches to bodily being, they may be appreciated as embodying a western orientated struggle with its own dualist traditions. For those artists drawing on 'non western' dance traditions and/or a physical culture that is 'other' to a white western norm, their relationship to that struggle may be constructed differently.

A new corporeality in some 'alternative' western dance practices may be felt to embody concerns with the dualist legacy of rationalism. To some extent this may be linked to the concerns of postmodern theorists to challenge the notion of the autonomous rational subject that spearheaded the ideals of the Enlightenment. Such ideals may be perceived to have framed the domination of the body by the rational mind in the practice of dance techniques that are now criticised as instrumental in attitude to the body. As discussed in chapter

six, situating the philosophical development of body:mind dualism in the context of differences in physical day to day experience provides a context for the historic prioritisation of the faculty of reason. Arguably it has been the success of disembodied reasoning that has led to the recognition of its underside: in chapter seven it has been suggested that a sense of 'lack' may be felt to be more intensified the further the 'symbolic' disconnects itself from physical experience. Dancers seem to need to retrieve what is felt to be missing in contemporary western culture by searching not only 'other' cultures but, through the practice of body awareness techniques, their bodily 'evolutionary' development.

Ironically, it may also be felt that those 'alternative' practices which may be viewed as responding to the negative aspects of the Enlightenment legacy, reveal a desire for a (re-)connection with (lost) innate human capacities that is not out of keeping with Enlightenment humanism. Similarly humanist is the focus on the agency of the individual subject which allows for the felt experience of the dance artist's intentionality to be significant. At a theoretical level, this may be viewed as in keeping with Merleau-Ponty's claim that the laws of cause and effect do not govern the psychological realm. Or alternatively, Varela's suggestion that agency may be considered as causal because it is embedded in the social would further emphasise dance as a communicative social act. From a more practical perspective it can be recognised that the individual immersed in alternative 'somatic' dance practices, in emphasising 'immediacy' and physical responsiveness is the antithesis of the rationalists' resort to reason. Rather, such a dancer may be thought to exemplify an existential phenomenological approach to 'being in the world'. This is particularly evident in contact improvisation in which there

can be seen an emphasis on interpersonal 'copresent' (Friedland and Boden, 1994) embodied interaction.

A postmodernist view of the Enlightenment that prioritises the negative aspects of dualism may be seen as distorted by current concerns with the detrimental aspects of its legacy. For instance, in relation to the Enlightenment legacy in aesthetics, Sara Houston (2002) suggests refocusing on the credence Kant gave, in his third critique, to the realms of the sensual and the imaginative in the aesthetic experience. It may also be helpful to reconsider Kant's view of humanism:

If we grant that the urge to society is natural to man but that his fitness and propensity for it, i.e. sociability, is a requirement of man as a creature with a vocation for society and hence is a property pertaining to his humanity, then we must also inevitably regard taste as an ability to judge whatever allows us to communicate even our *feeling* to everyone else, and hence regard taste as a means of furthering something that everyone's natural inclination demands.

Kant, 1987[1790],163[297]

For Kant, the motivation to comprehend from others' points of view as being part of an inherent social contract fits his theoretical commitment to the possibility of a universal (or synthetic a priori) moral law 'given...as a fact of pure reason' (Kant, 1977, [1788] 41,[5:47]. His 'categorical imperative' upheld the Enlightenment belief in a rationally based obligation to all fellow humans. Currently, the scant regard given to issues of metaphysics in the era of poststructuralist theory, together with postmodern concerns with difference, makes the acceptance of such a theoretical approach unlikely. However, in a context in which global concerns affect local issues and any pretence of one

homogenous culture in a city such as London is problematic, prioritising the desire to interact with others might, at a practical level, be an important ideal to uphold.

From a perspective situated within the phenomenology that has informed this thesis, it is interesting to note that Merleau-Ponty, while critical in some respects of how Kant articulated the relationship between consciousness and worldⁱⁱ, was more positive about Kant's account of aesthetic engagement in which 'the subject is no longer the universal thinker of objects rigorously interrelated, the positing power who subjects the manifold to the law of understanding...' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962[1945]xix). Moreover Merleau-Ponty comes to a not dissimilar conclusion about the importance of the relationship between self and other. To emphasise this, his final statement in Phenomenology of Perception cites not another philosopher but a man of action, the mystically inclined pilot Antoine de Saint Exupéry: 'Man is but a network of relationships, and these alone matter to him' (Saint Exupéry in Merleau-Ponty, 1962 [1945], 530).

It is not suggested that a commitment to such interaction would be easy, nor is it intended that through it would be recovered an essentialist understanding of humanity. It is however, posited that it might lead to consideration of why, within western traditions in aesthetics, some aspects of Kant's legacy have been prioritised over others. Those theories of philosophical aesthetics and critical practices that draw on a Kantian notion of 'disinterestedness' might benefit from revisiting, in the context of the twenty-first century, the relationship he suggested between moral and aesthetic judgements:

Taste enables us, as it were, to make the transition from sensible charm to a habitual moral interest without making too violent a leap; for taste presents the imagination as admitting, even in its freedom, of determination that is purposive for the understanding, and it teaches us to like even objects of sense freely, even apart from sensible charm.

Kant, 1987[1790], 230 [354]

Historically the Enlightenment's resort to reason in order to flee from prejudice and superstition (Kant, 1987 [1790] 161) may be seen as challenging a dogmatic adherence to power by promoting the ideal that individuals think for themselves. Yet this individualism was tempered by a conception of morality free from self interest.

Dance artists within western society, by developing concepts of lived, even thinking bodies, are struggling with the inevitable prejudice against what was separated from reason. However they are not necessarily opposed to all aspects of the Enlightenment tradition. As I stated at the end of chapter seven, what the artists I talked with seemed to share is a commitment to dance as a communicative interaction within society. This is not to suggest a prioritising of the referential over the poetic in their aesthetics or any naive assumptions that dance can be universally communicable. Rather, that understanding the different ways in which their dance negotiates bodily significance is an important aspect in the development of their choreographic style. For these artists it seems this is so bound up with their own sense of self (or rather selves) that what they value is a kind of personal integrity in performance, revealing of the 'truth' of their lived experience as they understand it in the moment.

Often to the detriment of their careers, these artists have made decisions in relation to these values rather than what they thought people, important in terms of funding or opportunities, would like. Where perhaps fortuitously (or responding to unrecognised pressures) they have made decisions that did fit in with a known agenda, they seemed anxious to assert that it was their decision and suited their artistic concerns. Where possible, and to the limits of their agency, they challenge what Kant would call 'passive reason'. Their approaches to their work may be viewed as relating to those aspects of Kant's aesthetics that suggest a humanist moral dimension but reworked in a very different, postmodern context that perhaps offers a way out of either essentialism or absolute relativism. In contrast, an aesthetic tradition that focuses on Kant's notion of disinterestedness has led to his aesthetics being associated with the appreciation of classical, formal dance that, for instance, supports the dance critic Roger Copeland's (1990) preference for Balanchine's choreography to that of Bausch. If more emphasis were placed on the humanist ethics underpinning Kant's aesthetics, dance artists who struggle with how their dances can be appreciated within the context of diversity may not be so far removed from Kantian concerns with aesthetics as at first might be supposed.

I am aware that there is another bleaker reading of this in which, caught up in hidden discourse, the artists' actions are merely inscribed by the power structures of society still dominated by ways of thinking belonging to a (western) elite. Moreover the work of this small group of artists, working on the edges of mainstream dance, is unlikely to be representative of the values that dominate within the dance sector as a whole. My own understanding of dance, in which 'dance, like music, resides at a juncture between the biological and the cultural' (Grau, 1999,166) not unsurprisingly corresponds

to that of my tutor's and may be thought of as 'typical of a middle-class liberal' (Grau, 1999, 166). As such my perspective has its own position within the cultural discourses in which dance is placed. However, reflecting on this research I have become conscious that what drew me to the artists I talked to was, at least in part, the values I perceived to be embodied in their work. This in some ways was a surprise because when I initially chose the artists my main concern was to ensure some of them had different cultural and/or dance backgrounds to my own. For ethical reasons I had decided to approach only those whose work I respected even though it might not be representative of the work I most enjoyed. It was through the research process that I recognised that what I respected was that I perceived their work as embodying concerns I shared. These might be summed up as valuing the attempt to communicate across difference (whether of culture, age or gender) and a willingness to enter into an interaction with the audience with a sense of honesty. Whether many other people would perceive these values to be embodied in their workⁱⁱⁱ and, how representative such values are of the wider dance sector in London (or even further afield), are issues that could only be resolved through further research. In terms of this project what has been found is that reflecting on what is embodied in dance can enrich appreciation. Further that the experiences of living, working and watching dance in a diverse society such as London may shape perceptions of dance so that perhaps some shared significances begin to cut across more obvious differences.

What has been argued for in this thesis is that in the play between semiotics and phenomenology dance can be appreciated as a communicative phenomenon. Aesthetic enjoyment of this phenomenon might be described as an embodied savouring of its primarily poetic or aesthetic function which

focuses attention on phenomenological engagement with the medium of the dance whilst allowing for a play between the associative functions that bring in aspects of performance, context, and the responses of the audience. Intermeshed with aesthetic ideas which may be perceived as embodied in the dance are cultural understandings of the temporal and spatial structuring of bodily action. In the context of cultural diversity, in which these cannot be taken for granted, reflecting on their significance may enrich the understanding and appreciation of dance. Rooted yet unbounded by the 'real' of the physical, the potential for dance to negotiate different ways of bodily being stands in contrast to both the presentation of the definitive (modernist) subject and the dislocation of embodied experience from a (postmodern) world constituted by continually shifting signs. In the context of current concerns with difference, consideration of this negotiation may bring ethical dimensions into play to determine a shift in attitudes to the aesthetic. In order to fully appreciate the wealth of dance performed in London it may be helpful to become experienced not only in attending to different dance traditions but in attending to dances differently.

Notes to Conclusion

ⁱ 'So act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as a principle in a giving of universal law' (Kant, 1977, [1788] 28 :31).

ⁱⁱ For instance, Merleau-Ponty, drawing on Husserl, posits an important distinction between Kant's 'noetic analysis which bases the world on the synthesizing activity of the subject', and the phenomenological 'noematic reflection' which remains within the object and, instead of begetting it, brings to light its fundamental unity' (Merleau-Ponty 1962[945], x).

ⁱⁱⁱ A few comments made to me at a performance by Sushma Mehta, and what I have read in reviews in relation to one of the anonymous artists, suggest some other people have appreciated these qualities.

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Appendix One

Draft Questions for Initial Discussions with Artists

(NB The questions were adapted in relation to each individual artist but acted as a guide to the structure of the discussions and subjects to be covered)

[I have been looking at the you sent me and ...]

...I would be interested to know what you think has had most influence on the performance material you are currently (have recently been) working on?

(If not clear from above) What dance/performance traditions are you drawing on in this current work ...why?

Tell me [more] about how you have approached making this current work?

Would you say your own physical make up inspires and/or constrains what you create for yourself to perform?

If yes

How? Why?

Do you think audiences make assumptions about you in relation to your physical presence?

If yes ...

What assumptions? Why?

How does this affect what you create for yourself to perform?

Do you think the way you move relates to any personal attitudes to life, outlook or beliefs?

If yes ...For example?...

How would you account for this ..For e.g. Is it something you have striven for consciously?

Is this still the case in stillness?

Do you think audience members are aware of this?

Consciously?

Unconsciously?

Thinking of the different processes of creating, rehearsing and performing solo movement can you describe how you are aware of your movement?

Are there differences in each process of creating, rehearsing and performing?

Is it important to you to have a sense of yourself from the audience's point of view?

If yes

How are you aware of this?

From your experiences as both performer and audience how would you describe what is happening between performer and audience when a performance 'works'?

Appendix Two

Summary of Key Contacts

Contacts with Key Artists

Nina Anderson:

Initial Discussion 25 April 2003 at Morley College linked to watching rehearsal Choreography seen in studio as part of discussion

Follow Up:

Emailed text

Discussion 13 March 2004

Plus further informal follow up discussions including visit to see Phoenix with Artists B and D and observation of short performance 16 October 2005 at Morley Gallery

Joint discussion and observation of work on video 20 July 2005

Observation of groupwork in performance at Morley College July 2006

Final discussion and review of text 6 April 2007

Artist B

Initial discussion: 9 March 2003 at Morley College

Examples of work seen in performance prior to interview

Follow Up:

Emailed text

Discussion 11 November 2005 at Morley College

Joint discussion and observation of work on video 20 July 2005

Observation of rehearsal 3 February 2006 plus informal follow up discussions including visit to see Phoenix with Artist D and Nina Anderson

Further discussions 17 and 24 May 2006 including visit to see dance performance

Final review of text 17 April 2007

Artist D

Initial discussion: April 26 2003 at Artist's home

Examples of work seen live prior to discussion

Follow Up:

Emailed Text

Discussion 5 June 2004 and observation of rehearsal 19 August 2004

Observed in performances at The Place and Clore in 2005 and 2006

Plus informal discussions at visits to performances by Phoenix (with Anderson and Artist B), Rosas and Raimund Hogue

Final review of text by email

Contacts with Artists Participating in Initial Discussions Only

Artist A

Initial discussion: 23 December 2002 at Artist's home

Examples of work (live and on video) seen prior to discussion. Discussion linked to watching video of rehearsal for recent work

Follow Up: Emailed text.

Final review of text and further discussion 23 February 2007

Gaby Agis:

Initial discussion: 21 June 2003 at Morley College

Examples of work seen in performance prior to discussion, plus participation in classes

Follow Up:

Emailed text

Observation of Touch Un-Sited at South London Gallery 17 June 2005

Final meeting to review text 19 January 2007

Sushma Mehta:

Initial discussion: 30 February 2003 at Morley College

Examples of Choreography seen prior to discussion

Follow Up:

Emailed text leading to informal discussion January 2005

Observation of performance of Shift May 3 2003

Reviewed text further by email and final discussion 3 February 2007 at cafe

Participation in Formal Discussions

New Peckham Varieties 28 October 2004

'Talking About Dance'

with Teresa Early (chair), Carl Campbell

Karen Foster, Darryl Jaffrey, Jacky Lansley,

'Win Lab' Independent Dance 21 December 2006

Discussion regarding improvisation

led by Eva Karczag and Kate Brown with participants in Eva Karczag's workshops

Laban 31 March 2007

Discussion regarding problems of globalism and cross culturalism as part of Dance Theatre Journal conference 'Writing on Performance'

Further Discussions/ Sessions Observed

Southbank Centre, 23 April 2003

'British Hip Hop' ADAD Discussion chaired by Donald Hutera with Robert Hylton, Kwesi Johnson, and Banksy

Southbank Centre 19 June 2003

'Finding A Voice' with Nahid Sadiqui

Independent Dance 21 and 25 August 2006

Observation KJ Holmes workshop plus informal discussion with KJ and some workshop participants

Appendix Three

Research Participant Consent Form

The form was signed by each participating artist. It should be noted that there was a change of supervision after the forms were signed as initial discussions took place early in the research. Those artists continuing to participate later in the research process were informed verbally about the change. Three artists later decided not to remain anonymous

UNIVERSITY OF SURREY ROEHAMPTON



RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title and brief description of Research Project:

An investigation into 'embodiment' informing an exploration of the relationship between everyday perceptions of people's physical presence and actions and interpretations of performances by Independent Dance and Performance Artists working in Contemporary London.

Name and Status of Investigator:

D. Jane Carr Research Student

Consent Statement:

I agree to take part in this research, and am aware that I am free to withdraw at any point. I understand that the information I provide will be treated in confidence and that my identity will be protected, as far as possible, in the publication of any findings.

Prior to publication I will be able to see what has been written in relation to my involvement in the research.

Name

Signature

Date

Please note: if you have a concern about any aspect of your participation, please raise this with the investigator, or with the Head of School or Arts, Professor Allen Fisher.

To confirm my status as a research student you are welcome to contact my supervisors, Andree Grau or Stacy Prickett.